HM

THE HARD M C MAG

The Burial
Fireflight
Impending Doom
Sent By Ravens
Fruhstuck
Denison Witmer
Readers' Poll Winners
Leaders

MYCHILDREN MYBRIDE

March 2012 • *Issue Number 154*
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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

BANDS ON BANDS

Who knows the ins and outs of being a touring musician than one? So began the idea to see if Impending Doom and Mychildren Mybride would interview each other for their respective stories. I'm stoked that they took on the challenge, but also delivered in both directions (coming up with great questions and answering with depth and thought). Every once in a while a couple bands emerge that seem to grow alongside each other and blow up at the same time. So it is with these two bands. Fans of one are apt to love the other and vice-versa. While on different labels, their paths still managed to cross several times. How many times have you seen both on the same day?

How are you liking the new all-digital format of HM Magazine? Are you sharing it with others? Whenever you see an article (or an entire issue) that you like (or hate), you can share it with a click of a button. The recipient will get a link that'll send 'em straight to the online edition (where they'll have to subscribe if they don't already). It's kinda fun to be able to share that way. If you wanna give someone a taste of HM without them having to pay anything, we've made our December Issue (#151, with In the Midst of Lions on the cover) available free of password protection. The link to that is easy to remember: tinyurl.com/HM151

Are you listening to the HM Magazine Podcast? That's always free.

By the time you read this, *Rock Stars on God, Volume 2* should be getting printed. I'll also be waist-deep in the Michael Sweet autobiography that I'm co-writing with him. It was a pretty cool surprise to see him take the readers' poll "Favorite Singer" category. It's also ironic, too, that the photo of him on page 32 shows him playing guitar and not singing (since he rarely gets the recognition he deserves for his six-string playing ability – the dude shreds).

Well, enjoy this issue. I've gotta get back to work!

SPINNING AT HM NOW

MXPX	*Plans Within Plans*	Fresh, energetic and melodic. Ahhh...
SONS	*Keep Quiet*	In the words of the Scorpions, "Still loving you."
GRAVE ROBBER	*You're All Gonna Die!*	Rabid, fast, ghoulish and soulful.
ONE SONIC SOCIETY	*Forever Reign*	It's awesome when good worship music delivers.
MCMB	*S/T*	Like Stryper would say, "Makes me wanna sing" (along).
ANDY CHERRY	*Nothing Left To Fear*	If this is the new Nashville sound, I'm buying.
IMPENDING DOOM	*Baptized in Filth*	Oh, heck yeah! Intense, tight, loud, heavy.

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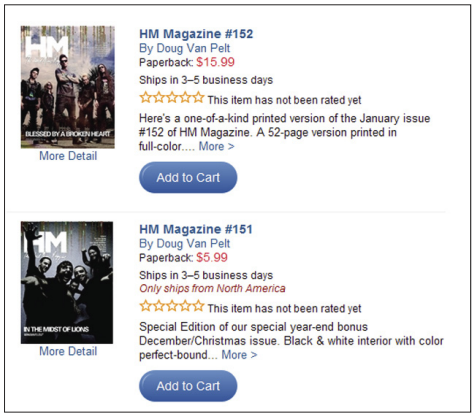
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GRATITUDE N' ENCOURAGEMENT

Email and text are a poor way to express the gratitude and thanks that I have for the work that you have poured your life into over the past few ... decades. I have read your articles and flipped though HM's pages at my highest, lowest and everywhere-in-between places in life and they have always led me closer to the heart of God and encouraged me. For that a "thank you" is in order and yet insufficient at expressing the true thanks I have. Perhaps in Heaven I will give you a hug or something cool like a real life-sized chocolate guitar wrapped in real 24-carat gold foil or something like that! Blessings and grace as you transition further into Tronville (digital publication). By the way, has anyone brought up the idea that perhaps if people payed $x more per month we could fire up the old printing press again? i.e. if you got a kickstarter page going to restart *HM Magazine,* because I can't tell you how many times I have used it as a witnessing tool at work and school and road trips and at our concert venue – ([the] REVolution (aka facelessempire) in Ashland, Oregon, been doing shows since Ghoti Hook and Slick Shoes and still hanging in with Sleeping Giant and MCMB in recent shows, small plug. It is just sometimes more effective to communicate with folks when we're not "plugged in." Just a thought, but either form blesses the Lord and the scene deeply!!! Thank you again,
–Paul Messenger, via email

Ed – Wow. Thanks in advance for that chocolate guitar (with almond and pecan alternating frets). Surely there will be metal and chocolate in Heaven. In regards to asking for more money from subscribers to get HM back in print, I don't see that happening. WIthout advertising coming in with healthy sales, the magazine is just not operating with enough income/cashflow. Ads are just so necessary to cover those large print bills. As much as lots of us badly want to get back in print, I think we have to learn to enjoy the digital versions. Of course, there is the lulu.com option (see ad on page 40), which allows you to pay (lulu) more ($5.99 for B&W and about $15.99 for color) for a printed copy of any 2012 edition. That doesn't really benefit HM Magazine much in a business sense, but I love it, because it makes holding a copy of the new issue of HM Magazine in your hand (again) possible.

I LOVE TECHNOLOGY

I am writing to thank you for the work you have put into *HM Magazine* and to encourage you to continue the excellent work on it. *HM Magazine* is one of the only magazines that I've found that covers the realm of Christian alternative music. When it comes to learning about the latest in music or keeping up with my favorite bands, *HM* is one of my main sources. In one of my classes – Introduction to Mass Communication – we have been talking about technology changing the media industry and I think that your transition to digital distribution of the magazine is an effective innovation of the new technologies that have become available. Also, the various aspects of the magazine – design, writing, columns – are all very good and make it fun and easy to read. You and your team have done a great job of creating a magazine that not only looks good, but you have also created a magazine that is filled with good work. I personally have a great interest in working with music – do you have any suggestions or insight as someone who works within the music industry? Thank you and God bless,
–Simon Howard, via email

Ed – Thanks for the encouragement. I have to give David Allen, our old Art Director, continued props for leaving me with a killer, clean template that makes this publication easy to read. Here's hoping we can get more exposure in the growing digital magazine market. It's hard to answer an advice question like that. Fortunately, we've been running Randy Spencer's "ask.seek.rock" column, which offers general advice for this kind of stuff. My two cents is just to do something. Get into motion and see what happens. Start local and hone your craft/skills.

TRIPLE SHOT SATISFIES

Thank you, Doug. 27 issues sounds more than fair! I'm not used to online mags, but the layout looks nice. Thanks!
–Joseph Dutko, *via email*

Ed – In response to your question about where your old subscription stood, I looked your info up on the database, found you had 9 issues remaining on your sub and then tripled it to 27 issues left, meaning your sub now expires with the January 2014 Issue #177. All this reminds me of my favorite Starbucks drink – Triple (shot) Venti (size) Carmel Macchiato (flavor).

SURPRISED BY THE EXPERIENCE

I get it completely and I was able to get into the mag no problem. It looks really good and I'm finding I actually am liking it online more than I thought I might – as I'm able to link directly to bands' web pages, etc. Before I either had to write things down to follow up online while reading or else sit in front of the computer to read the issue. I think I'll adjust well. I pray all continues to go well for you and your family. Hopefully we'll see you at Cstone this summer.
–Travis Furman, *via email*

Ed – So glad you're discovering some of the cool tools and features of our online/digital issues. This reminds me of the time I discovered the incredible taste of the Mountain Dew Baja Blast. Now I enjoy going to Taco Bell. Who would have predicted that?

HM

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SCRIPTURE "...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." (Romans 10:9-10)

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HARDNEWS
Quick & concise

HM MAGAZINE SHOWCASE
DURING AUSTIN'S SXSW

If you're anywhere near Austin during Spring Break, come and enjoy the music and pick up free goodies (like copies of HM Magazine, These Hearts/Close Your Eyes posters, sampler CDs, etc) and get an up close look at the Imperial Cymbals line.

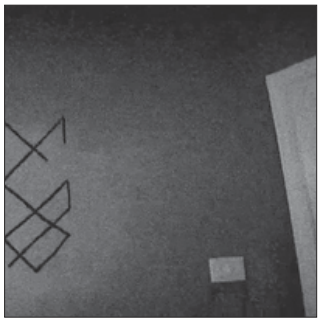
Here's the lineup and set times:

1pm: Dead Words
2pm: These Hearts
3pm: Light Up the Darkness
4pm: Rocky Loves Emily
5pm: Quiet Science

It's an All-Ages Free show. Wed, March 14.

WAR OF AGES
NEW ALBUM: RETURN TO LIFE

Return To Life releases on April 24. "We are extremely excited about our *Return To Life* release in every way," states the band. "Musically, we stuck to our roots, brought back the heavy rhythmic style and mixed it with the maturity of having four previous albums under our belts. We also joined forces with producer Zeuss, who boasts a catalog with names like Terror, Emmure, Hatebreed, etc." Not only is this album instrumentally rhythmic, it is also vocally rhythmic. Leroy Hamp stepped out of his comfort zone and ventured into the realms of Rage Against The Machine, Comeback Kid, and Darkest Hour and mixed each with his own style. "I don't think I broke any new ground vocally or created something new entirely," says Hamp, "but it is new for War of Ages and a step in the right direction for me personally."



Mychildren Mybride offer interactive maze

MCMB are excited to announce an interactive experience that will allow fans to unlock elements of the song "Dreamcatchers." The immersive experience finds fans waking up in a mysterious room and needing to escape. Following perilous paths, the decisions fans make will either move them along to the next step of the adventure or lead to their death. Upon dying, fans will be treated to a segment of "Dreamcatchers," meaning that the only way to unlock each segment of the song is to explore the myriad choices that the adventure presents. Upon successful completion, fans will be prompted to restart the adventure in order to unlock new music. "With the release of 'Dreamcatchers' we really wanted to try something new and different, something that would make our fans conspire together and act as a community," frontman Matthew Hasting excitedly explains. "So please, throughout Facebook, YouTube and Twitter work together to figure out the challenge that lies ahead. Choose your fate wisely and listen closely to everything you see. You will soon hear the final song before our album is released." Go: http://bit.ly/mcmbnightmare

News bullets

Demon Hunter have debuted a new song from its *True Defiance* album: "Someone To Hate." This will be the band's sixth full-length album, in stores April 10th. Look for Demon Hunter on the cover of the next issue of *HM Magazine* (somewhere on Youtube Adolph Hitler just breathed a sigh of relief... http://tinyurl.com/HitlerHM).

We Came As Romans and **Red Jumpsuit Apparatus** are both part of the 5th Annual Rockapalooza Festival, Presented by Monster Energy Drink.

John Mark McMillan has launched his 25-city *The Economy Class Sprint Tour: A Mighty Raucous Evening with John Mark McMillan and Friends*.

Bluetree to release new album with its first single, "Jesus Healer," a personal snapshot of singer/songwriter **Aaron Boyd**'s journey with his daughter with Cystic Fibrosis.

Pomegranates are set to release its new album, *Heaven*, on June 5th via Modern Outsider Records.

Roxx Records and **Liberty n Justice** are proud to announce the release of the debut single from *Hell is coming to Breakfast*.

Passion founder Louie Giglio unveiled *Symphony, I Life My Hands* DVD, the latest Installment in the highly successful *Passion Talk Series*.

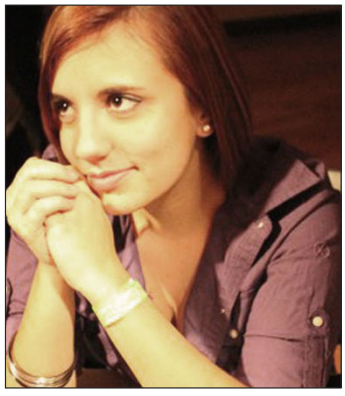
Impending Doom have posted a new video, showing a behind-the-scenes look at the recording of *Baptized in Filth*.

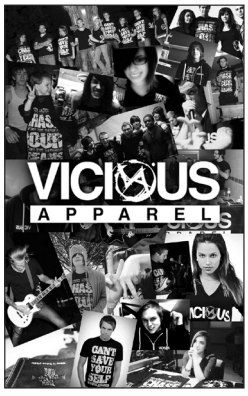
Green River Ordinance have announced a headlining tour to support their new album, *Under Fire*.

MxPx have premiered their first single, "Far Away," from their upcoming album *Plans Within Plans* (due out April 3 on MRI/Rock City Recording Company).

Aaron Gillespie has released a new live EP, *Echo Your Song*, which features three Hillsong covers and three originals from *Anthem Song*.

Long Live the King are releasing an EP, *Transient*, on April 10th.





Industry Profile: Vicious Apparel

TOM'S AUNT SAID HIS DYED HAIR MADE HIM LOOK LIKE SID VICIOUS AND THAT'S HOW AN APPAREL COMPANY WAS BORN... SORT OF. READ ON FOR MORE INSIGHT.

How did you get started with this company?
I would never have thought that I would be making clothes, but after changing schools and switching around my majors, I found myself in a rut. After a lousy couple of semesters at my new school I wondered if I made the wrong choice by leaving The American Academy Of Art as a design major to pursue music and web design at Columbia College Chicago. I had no clue what I was going to do, so I prayed that God would give me direction with school, my career and my life. Literally the next day I felt that prayer answered by sitting next to a guy on the train home from Chicago. I saw him creating some cool designs and asked him about it. He told me he was working on designs for the clothing company he was going to start. We started talking more and I found out he went to Columbia as an Advertising Art Direction major. I got one of those feeling when you know what you're trying to say, but you can't think of the word and then someone says it! That night I stayed up until, like, 3 a.m. or so and designed two of the shirts I currently have for sale today. I posted them on Facebook that same night and got some great feed back. That weekend at church I can't remember what the sermon was about, but I remember the pastor saying, "You can't save yourself," and I loved that! I had to design a shirt with that on it. Our "Salvation" shirt has been one of our best sellers which reads simply: "Can't Save Yourself." I wasnt sure if I would actually have any of these made until a band I started sponsoring needed a shirt made with the words "Chase Your Dreams" on it for a show they were playing with For Today, Bleeding Through, Attila and The Word Alive. I couldn't believe that I could sell my stuff at that show, so I made sure that the Chase Your Dreams shirt was made by that day. Thankfully, God blessed me with enough money to really get this going at the time and I felt like He just opened so many doors for me that I just had to keep going with it.

Why the name Vicious Apparel?
Back when people used myspace, I had some crazy hair that I dyed black and my aunt had said I looked like Sid Vicious. At the time I honestly had no clue who that was, ha ha, but I just adopted the name Tom Vicious as my "Myspace name." Six years later after meeting Justin from Joker Apparel, I thought Vicious Apparel would work nicely. Now I feel it is a bit more appropriate to say it represents both being bold with your faith as well as a humble admission that we are all born Vicious to one degree or another and certainly all fall short of the glory of God.

What do you think you do that's different than other apparel companies?
I try and keep my prices affordable without trashing quality, I have started using the same materials as more established lines do, but I reduce the profit margin slightly so the price is competitive, but I don't feel like I'm robbing anyone. We don't try to be the next big thing and we really try not be just a clothing company, but an outreach. There is a ton of people hurting in our scene and we try to be a light to them. I don't know if this makes us different than companies or not, but at the end of the day It doesn't bother me if we don't sell anything as long as we – through one way or another – make a difference in someone's life.

What does it feel like when you see someone on the street wearing one of your shirts?
Oh man, I can't even describe it. It's just a surreal feeling. It really never gets old at all, I feel so blessed. I always had an idea to make clothes that become part of someone's "identity," if you know what I mean. Everyone has that shirt or hoodie that they look for every time they go out and I just have always wanted that shirt to be something from Vicious Apparel. Another thing I have noticed recently is I can honesty remember every person's face and what item they bought from us.

Why do you donate funds to charities?
We give to charities and also church, because God calls us to offer the first fruits of or labor and since God has blessed me so much with Vicious Apparel I can't help but to give back to Him and to people in need, I just feel like I should.

What's a typical work day look like for you?
Well, I'm addicted to coffee so I get me some of that before I do anything...

[*Go to hmmag.com for the rest of the interview*]

BY DOUG VAN PELT

Owl City's **Adam Young** recently posted a piano version of the **Johnny Cash** song, "Home of the Blues."

Counterparts was picked by *Alternative Press* as one of "100 Bands You Need to Know."

SoS have released a new live album, *Nuking the Fridge*. It's a free download (soundsofsalvation.bandcamp.com)

Joining Motorhead, Slipknot and Slayer on the Rockstar Energy Drink Mayhem Festival will be **As I Lay Dying** and **The Devil Wears Prada**.

These Hearts are playing some midwest shows (in Nashville, St. Louis, Tupelo and Arlington, TX) around their trip to Austin, where they're playing the *HM Magazine* Showcase.

Auburn have released a hilarious new video, "I'm Over the Ups and Downs."

Sleeping At Last had its "Tethered" tune played on a re-broadcast of the *Grey's Anatomy* episode "This Magic Moment."

Songs of Thunder, Vol. 1 is a collection of tunes from graduates of the Thunder School Nashville.

Levi the Poet has a new video posted for his poem, "Kaleidoscope."

Jason Campbell (Mortification) is starting a new record label based in his homeland of Canada. HammerDown Records is slated to have three new releases out this year but mum's the word on what they are. (hammerdownrecords.com)

KJ-52 is releasing his seventh studio project, *Dangerous*, on April 3.

John Elefante has initiated "phase two" of his Kickstarter campaign to finance his next solo album, *Come Alive*.

The name **Renee Yohe** may be familiar to you from all the support work the non-profit organization, To Write Love on Her Arms has done in her honor. Now she's making an album to showcase her fantastic voice.

LIVE REPORT

MUTEMATH

January 27

REVIEW & PHOTOS BY DOUG VAN PELT

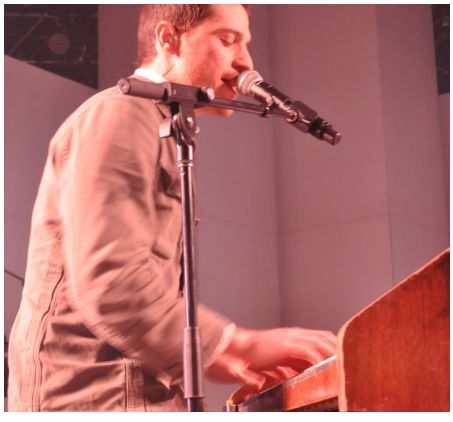
(Austin, TX) Stubb's BBQ has a nice little backyard venue that's not so small, actually. The gentle sloping land is bordered by building or fence and probably can hold 3 to 4,000 people in an area somewhat longer than those big circus tents at Cornerstone. Above the stage is one canvas cloverleaf, as if it were stolen from Sydney, Australia's iconic Opera House. This night it was packed with MUTEMATH fans.

Canon Blue had the honor of opening this *Odd Soul Tour* and I can say I was honored to have seen them. Quite the good fit for this audience – bouncing, lilting pop with lots of vocal layers. The guitarist added gentle harmonies with the keyboardist that were part Beach Boys and part Anathallo.

As a special surprise entrance, **MUTEMATH** came marching through the crowd with their parade drums and a beat pad held high. Then they quickly plugged in, while Darren King wrapped headphones onto his head with duct tape and they stormed right into the off-kilter, distorted thumps of "Odd Soul," which set the tone for the rest of the evening. After playing "Blood Pressure" they launched into "Spotlight," and then they took their first tiny break to catch their breath, greeting the audience and announcing that, "As promised, we will play you all the songs from *Odd Soul*." This was some information that I appreciated hearing. I think their new album is pretty spectacular and it seemed fitting to focus on brand new material when the band was breaking in their new guitarist, Todd Gummerman. "As an added bonus," Paul Meany smiled, "we will also perform numerous selections from our other albums."

There was a giant backdrop that had giant corrugated folds, kind of like a folding 20-feet-tall modesty screen in a dressing room. A projector splashed laser lights that framed the structure, lit it all up or danced moving images up there. A nice creative touch on an oft-used concert dressing… During "Tell Your Heart Heads Up" it flashed close-up images of the band that must've been captured by small web cams mounted on pianos, amps and the drumset. The player close-up views were awesome. It showed some nice and trippy blobs and other microscopic eye candy during "Allies."

The show was a constantly flowing cascade of melodies or droning fills that really kept up a brisk pace – but without feeling like we were being rushed. It was quite fulfilling. MUTEMATH does a great job creating "feel" and what's got to be improvisation. They're like great blues or jazz masters that really get it – plus they add an acid rock and straight-up rock vibe. During "Obsolete" Meany joins Mitchell-Cardenas and a standing King as they all club away at various floor toms and cymbals. Then they flowed into "Walking Paranoia," which really thumped loud. The studio version is great, but live it really reaches its potential. The new guy, Todd Gummerman adds some really nice high BGVs – a lot of "ooh-hooo's" near the end of "Stall Out." Meany's voice stands tall and clear and carries nice over the sonic bed they create. It really commanded center-stage attention during the slower number "No Time," where he sat on the piano and he carefully pronounced syllables and let each line of each verse with patience. The music makes you want to dance and the melodies make you want to sing along. Move over Coldplay, you've been lapped.



The band had my full attention when they played "Break The Same." Like his predecessor, Gummerman did hold his pedal board and "play" it like an instrument and the band swung into "Quarantine." Then Meany took things to the next level. A giant inflatable mattress appeared out of nowhere and Meany hurled himself onto it for some creative crowd surfing, all the while singing. The crowd moved like a well-rehearsed stagehand, passing the floating mattress back through the crowded outdoor audience, who roared with astonished approval. Amazing. Two more songs ("Reset" and "Typical") and a singing stroll through the crowd ended the night. What a show.

Photos (clockwise from top): Mitchell-Cardenas and King; Todd Gummerman; a couple of the Canon Blue guys; Paul Meany.

DAVE MUSTAINE OF MEGADETH

Photo: Richard Andrews

DAVE MUSTAINE OF MEGADETH

Photo: Richard Andrews

DAVE ELLEFSON OF MEGADETH

Photo: Richard Andrews

Album: *The Ones Who Wait*
Label: Asthmatic Kitty
Release Date: March 6, 2012
RIYL: Elliot Smith, Vic Chestnutt, Pedro the Lion
denisonwitmer.com

DENISON WITMER

To say that Denison Witmer has been going through a few life changes recently, would be quite the understatement. He was recently married, had a child and opened his own recording studio. Sadly, his father also passed away not long ago. Changes, both for good and bad, are always stressful, and Witmer's latest Asthmatic Kitty release, titled *The Ones Who Wait*, reveals how the singer/songwriter's recent big ticket emotional experiences have tested him in many ways.

"Honestly, the new album is about patience, and having the mindfulness of being in the moment and absorbing what's happening to you," Witmer explains. "I guess if I learned anything, it's that there's a time that you need to stop, and then there's a time that you need to go. It's the simplest of life's lessons, and it's not a major epiphany. I don't know that I learned any major life lessons. What I did learn is that sometimes your life dictates your timeline. It's important to understand when that's happening, and give yourself over to it graciously."

You might say losing his father stopped Witmer right in his tracks. For him, it was impossible to think about all the regular tasks associated with being a musician – such as writing, recording and touring – when he had much more pressing issues at hand.

"With my father's passing, I stopped doing everything music-related for a little while," Witmer recounts. "At first, that was hard. At the same time, I would never take that decision back." Stepping away from the rat-race-like world of the music business and spending time with his ailing father probably produced benefits Witmer may have never even imagined. "I grew in a lot of ways that I can't really put into words."

As soon as Witmer began recording once again, he did so in a new and refreshing way. Instead of booking studio time and being under pressure to produce within a strict deadline, Witmer could record in his own room, with his own timetable. This return process all started, however, with building his studio, The Honey Jar.

"I got back into music by preparing a space to make music in," says Witmer. "I'd never done that before, and it was really really fun." He probably knows more about soundproofing now than he ever did before. Witmer needed to create this physical space, to give him more creative space. "Because I have my own recording studio," he continues, "it afforded me the space and flexibility of sort to create at leisure."

Some of the music Witmer was listening to up to the point of making this new album might surprise you. Although he shares a lot in common with Josh Rouse, one of his favorite artists to listen to at the time, there was also a little alt.country in that mix. "I was listening to a lot of Richard Buckner, like, early Richard Buckner albums," he says. Even so, Witmer hasn't quite taken to wearing a Stetson and filling his recordings with fiddle and steel guitar. (Come to think of it, neither does Buckner). Instead, *The Ones Who Wait* is filled with much of the same gentle, acoustic, comforting folk-pop we've come to grow and love with Witmer.

An alternate title for Witmer's new album could have been *Good Things Come to Those Who Wait*. You see, Witmer had to wait for his big life events to play themselves out, as well as working through the time-consuming construction of his studio, before he could once again create inspired art. However, the fruit of this patience is yet one more excellent Witmer full-length album. It is not recommended that songwriters go through extreme experiences in order to create great art. Nevertheless, pain is simply a part of life. The good news is that talented people like Witmer always seem to find a way to transform personal pain into beautiful music. This makes Denison Witmer well worth the wait.

BY DAN MACINTOSH

Album: *Mean What You Say*
Label: Tooth & Nail
Release Date: February 28, 2012
Members: Zach Riner, vocals; Andy O'Neal, guitar; James "JJ" Leonard, guitar; Jon Arena, bass; Dane Anderson, drums
RIYL: Emery, The Classic Crime, Blindside, 30 Seconds to Mars

facebook.com/sentbyravens

SENT BY RAVENS

With a new album and an imminent tour with Tooth & Nail labelmates Emery, Sent by Ravens are fired up to bring their music to the masses again. Lead singer and founding member Zach Riner says that *Mean What You Say*, the follow-up to 2010's critically acclaimed *Our Graceful Words*, is his most personal effort as a lyrical artist. And, in the heavy SBR tradition, Andy, JJ, Jon and Dane deliver the crushing instrumental accompaniment to Riner's vocals.

"*Our Graceful Words* was a different kind of emotional experience for me. It was a lot of me talking to God kind of thing," Riner says, as he explains the contrast between his band's previous record to their new one. "This one's more of a me being comfortable with who I am in my relationship with God, and being able to portray that on CD. It's kind of like I had free range to take a look into myself and question the things in my heart. A lot of the CD is introspective. I feel like I was mature enough in my life to say, 'Hey, I want to talk about relationships and religion and things like that.'"

While sects of so-called Christianity that give the Church a black eye continue to form all over, the movement to write songs about biblical truth, not man-made delusion, lives on. The title track of *Mean What You Say* is "walk the talk" personified. "I wrote that song on an acoustic first," Riner says. "I got really pissed off with the Westboro Baptist Church and people who say 'God hates fags.' Let's take those people, for instance. They preach 'God hates fags,' holding a book in your in their hand that tells you to love your neighbor. It's not just that group. There are other groups that do the same thing, but everybody groups it as the same deal. Everybody's entitled to their own opinion, but you need to have tact in what you say, because your words really affect people. That's all there is to it. All religion aside. You can hurt people with what you say."

Riner cites vocalists Brandon Boyd from Incubus and Blindside's Christian Lindskog as two of his major influences. He is blessed with amazing abilities as a singer and easily transitions from clean to scream anywhere in a song, like on the incendiary single, "We're All Liars." *Mean What You Say*'s closer is a beautiful duet of praise, entitled "Best in Me," where Riner pours it all out with his wife, Rachel.

What sets Sent by Ravens apart from legions of metalcore, alternative and progressive bands, is the band's realness and vulnerability, laid out in the open. "It's a cool thing to be able to express myself and not so much worry about preaching to people and just be able to touch those hard issues that some people may not," admits Riner. "When you're a Christian band, you're under this microscope of fans. I think I can just tell my story, I guess. I feel like I'm getting into a weird space if I'm preaching or ministering – or however people do that thing – to people they don't know or even people they do know. I think that's one of the coolest things about being a musician, is that you get a chance to entertain people and put your music out and hopefully they like it. But if a band really enjoys writing and they're presenting something because they feel they like it or they feel passionate about what they're saying, then I feel like that makes all the difference. It's different from other art forms. That's what keeps me going. "

BY CHARLIE STEFFENS

Album: TBD
Label: Come & Live!
Release Date: Fall 2012
Members: Levi Macallister, Brandi Macallister, Alex Sugg
RIYL: Henry Rollins, Bradley Hathaway, Kayleb Lee Chan, Spoken Groove

levithepoet.net

LEVI THE POET

The kid is busy with his business, folks. After interning at HM Magazine a couple years ago he's almost constantly been on the road, making videos and travelling as part of White Collar Sideshow's entourage.

What is new with Levi The Poet? (poems, albums, tours, videos, whatever).
Well, after a much-needed sabbath for Brandi (my wife) and I after being out on the road for a good eight months in 2011, we're getting ready to leave for a six-week long tour called *Fight The Silence*, which For Today is headlining. Brandi and I are going to be representing XXXChurch.com – a non-profit organization which deals with the topic of pornography for both those inside the industry and those who fund it via their "viewing pleasure" from the outside. I'll be performing a poem or two here and there and then we'll be running a "Confessions Video Booth," where show-goers can share their stories and have them uploaded to the XXXChurch website along the way.

We've seen a good response LTP material since joining up with Come&Live! in November, and we're in the process of writing a new album – together – right now, along with another friend in Albuquerque (Alex Sugg of Glowhouse). That being said, Levi The Poet is going to look/sound a little bit differently than it has in the past, which I'm praying will be a plus. Spoken-word is still going to be the fundamental backbone of the project, but we're going to incorporate some of Brandi and Alex's musicianship/production ears into the process, as well. I'm hoping to solidify a recording date within the month, with a potential fall release (Lord willing).

As for video, a few members of the Media & Communications team at Mars Hill Church Albuquerque filmed and released a video for a poem named "Kaleidoscope" in conjunction with the *Real Marriage Series*' sermon "Disgrace & Grace" – which dealt with sexual sin and assault, abuse, etc. – all topics that the poem speaks of and into. Next week, we'll be releasing a video for a poem that I recorded years ago – "Pretty in Pornography" – to be promoted in the same vein. I'm really excited about the response we've seen thus far from the first and praying that the second would be an even bigger "success" – essentially, that the Holy Spirit would use them to work redemptive change and transformation in the hearts and minds of those enslaved in sexual sin – wherever they may fall on the scale from perpetrator to victim. Some of the messages we've gotten have been so heartbreaking and yet so hopeful, with other people being encouraged to share their own stories as fear subsides in the light of seeing my transparency – which certainly doesn't make me amazing or anything, but I've always prayed that honesty in one would beget honesty in other and it's been amazing to see Jesus answering that prayer.

How did you get involved with spoken word?
I've pretty much decided it all started with God playing a practical joke on me. I hated being in front of people more than anything else, and no matter how many shows I play, I still get stage fright/cold sweats at every single one of them. It's annoying. I liked Bradley Hathaway back in the day and gave him some of my poetry when I was in high school (he didn't really like it that much). At any rate, I think the best answer that I can give is that I've always loved to write – ever since I can remember – and so I have an inclination towards the lyrical quality of a song before I have – out of which I form an opinion of the song itself. I can't listen to music with crappy lyrics (granted, "crappy," in this instance, is an entirely subjective term, as I listen to Eminem all the time). Spoken word is the lyrics to a song minus the song. A bunch of friends in Albuquerque knew that I liked to write and that I wanted to share my writing, so they asked me to start reading at shows and I suppose that somewhere along the line, I assumed that by "reading" they meant: "scream like a maniac and scare everyone."

Check out the full-length LTP interview at hmmag.com
Photo: Stephen Knight Photography

BY DOUG VAN PELT

Album: *Payola*
Label: Hyne Music/MTV
Release Date: March 6, 2012
Members: Dustin "Ruth," vocals/guitar/harmonica; Nicholas Wiinikka, guitar; Jesse Counts, bass; Ryan Peterson, drums
RIYL: Elliot Smith, The Dandy Warhols, The Shins, Weezer, Arcade Fire
ruththeband.com

RUTH

Ruth is a band that's been cranking out honest, authentic music for years, but may have slipped off a few radar screens in the last couple of years. *Payola* should change all that (and no, we don't mean the bribery concept).

What's the recent history with Ruth?
What's new with the band? Well, for starters, we are mostly Oregonians, Nick, Ryan & Jesse are now all residents of Portland, OR. I'm still holding on to our Washington roots, living in Battle Ground. We've gained some additions, Ryan, Nick and I have all gotten married in the last few years and Ryan's a dad. That's new! He's a good dad, I might add. Some other new additions would by my Marshall JCM 800 combo amp, this old Army amp and Nick's Danelectro guitar. Can't forget those. We're all working day jobs to pay our bills. Jesse is a painter (and awesome fine artist), Nick and Ryan do freelance design work and I work at my dad's auto repair shop.

We're still the same guys we have always been, I'd say with more hopeful hearts than ever. The dream of putting out *Payola* has been a long time coming. Coming out of our Tooth & Nail experience, I think we were all trying to catch our breath and gain our bearings on what mattered most to all of us. There were so many loose ends in our lives that we all felt we need(ed) to slow down and focus on trying to tie up. Also, I just think timing is everything and it wasn't quite time to record *Payola*. Jesse and I spent many days out on the North Fork of the Lewis River with our fishing rods in the water, plunking for steelhead. We would start a fire – rain or shine – and sit there with our bait on the bottom and dream about how we could make *Payola* and when we could get back on the road. I think the fishing was just therapy for having our hands tied. Trying to pay bills, feed mouths and fund a record takes time – especially when you have a high standard of the quality of record you want to put out. It's really a weird place to be, to have had a team of people (label, booking agent, management) who believe in you and value your art and you all work as hard as you can, do everything you're asked and then watch it kind of dissolve. But, I guess value is relative to who you are talking to. There are no hard feelings about how things went down, but we do have feelings – and it was hard at times to watch things slow down.

How did you hook up with MTV?
I spent some of the downtime recording a solo record, *Learn How to Love Someone*, with Chris Keene, from the band Surrogate, and released it in July 2010. Subsequently I was trying to settle a balance with our former booking agency, WME. There was some confusion (I kept getting notices saying I had a balance due, when I'd call to pay, they didn't see a balance), and I ended up on the phone with a guy there who wanted to hear what the band was up to. I sent him the solo record and he loved it and passed it on to a friend. That friend helped me secure some TV placements, including several on MTV. When we finished up *Payola* I sent him the tracks, hoping we could get some more TV placements. Some people at MTV got their hands on it and the rest is history (hopefully still in the making).

Anything you want to say about this photo?
This photo just makes me laugh. Every time I look at it I wonder when the stray dog or scraggly cat is going to walk in front of us. I call it "the stray dog picture."

Check out the full-length Ruth interview at hmmag.com
Photo: Michelle Goree Photography

BY DOUG VAN PELT

Album: *Redemption: Daylight*
Label: Mosaic Artistry Group
Release Date: March 17, 2012
Members: Cameron Gwaltney, vocals; Chad Altenberger, guitar; Gabe Steelman, drums
RIYL: Switchfoot, 12 Stones
thebeautifulrefrain.com

THE BEAUTIFUL REFRAIN

The Beautiful Refrain began with three friends in a worship band writing original songs that evolved from corporate worship to rock. Cameron Gwaltney, Chad Altenberger and Gabe Steelman are committed to taking their sound on the road.

While having scriptural content that they hope will speak to many people, the songs on The Beautiful Refrain's EP, *Redemption: Daylight*, are clearly not "stand up and sing them in church" worship songs. Cameron states that the band is trying to make a statement to the church and fans as he says, "Hey, we want to be more than just a band that Christians listen to. Of course, we lead worship and we'll lead worship for camps in the summer, but even more than that, we want this to be an outreach."

Representing the collective wisdom, teaching, and love that has poured into them, The Beautiful Refrain is grateful for the support of their local church as they give out what has been given to them. Cameron says, "I could talk for an hour about how we've seen God do little tiny things one step after the other to open this door. We never thought that we would be right here, but it's clearly nothing that we've done. We've been spoonfed by the Lord to get to this point and it's nothing that we've earned."

Pointing to a song called "Lowly Sound" from their EP, Cameron says, "The whole point of this song is coming from a place of humility and understanding that everything that we have and everything that we do is just given to us and we're allowed to do it because of God's grace. And there's nothing that we can do on this earth apart from Him. There's just so many things that we take for granted every single day."

Pushing themselves to reach higher with every new song and every new goal, Cameron, Chad and Gabe resolve to bring their craft of songwriting to new levels and to be a little out of the ordinary. As a new band, the sound of The Beautiful Refrain is still evolving as they pursue excellence. Cameron says, "You don't have time to explain (your songs) with every single person who is listening. I've really been striving and I've been pushed to try to say things in a little bit different way and to try to challenge myself a little bit in my own songwriting."

Now they are moving into new places as they pursue God's will for their lives in their music. Their EP, *Redemption: Daylight* will be released through Mosaic Artistry Group on March 17. In keeping with their desire to bring their sound and their focus outside of the church and into the lives of people who need to hear the hope of Jesus Christ, they have scheduled their release party in a small bar in the Harrisonburg, VA, area.

Knowing that the timing is right, The Beautiful Refrain is looking forward to the year in front of them. After their album release of *Redemption: Daylight*, they have various commitments throughout the summer and they hope to tour more extensively in the fall. Even as their first EP is poised to release, The Beautiful Refrain isn't content to rest on its achievements but is already planning a second EP for later in the year.

BY CRISTINA AGUIRRE

Album: *Quiet*
Label: Youngside
Release Date: March 3, 2012
Members: Martijn Krale, vocals; Wojtek Karel, bass; Tomek Kuzbik, drums; Marcin Karel, guitars
RIYL: U2, King's X, Muse
myspace.com/fruhstuck

FRUHSTUCK

Fruhstuck is a rock band from Poland with a good message to lay out. The band formed in 1997 and is still making smooth music today. I had the opportunity to Skype (with) lead vocalist, Martijn Krale, about the new album and what the band is doing these days. Martijn was a solid guy and very fun to talk to.

What has inspired your music?
All of us have different musical taste, but we do have similar interests. Our drummer has a taste for blues. We're all King's X fans. I'm the soft guy in the band, ya know – the old guy. I listen to a lot of John Mayer and Bob Dylan. King's X inspires the harmonies and melody. There are many different musical interests, though.

What is the band's message?
Well, we're from Poland and Poland is a very religious country. We live our lives for God and we want to express as a band that we are here to play for God. It's about what's in your heart and making decisions in your life based on the reality of God. We try to be honest and write honest lyrics. On this album there are a lot of lyrics of faith and (also) expressing where we are in our lives. It's an expression about living with God and walking together with Him. It's about life all day all the time. Basically, let's just be real.

Any plans to come to America for any tours?
We would love to, but right now our main focus is Poland and Europe. We all have lives and families to take care of at the present time. If ever it makes sense to play in America, we will; but we are not full-time and our main focus is here. But again, we would love to. We did come there back in 2003 and played the HM stage at Cornerstone and some other festivals and churches.

What were your thoughts of Cornerstone?
It was the most authentic festival. It was muddy, dusty and dirty, but at the same time very beautiful. I mean, we were a nobody band playing, but we were treated equally. We would love to play it again. It's a good festival with so much diversity and you could just feel the Holy Spirit radiate from there so much.

What are your goals for 2012?
We would love to play concerts in our own city and play more festivals. We are also working on another CD (fully acoustic) that we would like to release in 2012 and another album in early 2013. We would really like to just play and share the message. The higher goals are to express our feelings on God. If I can have individual conversations with people afterwards that would be great. Or to talk to them and get feedback on the music – that would be fantastic as well. So, to sum up: we want to tour, record and share our message. Music can change lives. If one of our songs changed someone's life, that would be incredible.

What does your band name mean?
Ha ha, it means "breakfast" in German. We picked the name, because it looks good. No particular reason. Sometimes people were curious about what the name meant, so we made up a few, but we seriously just picked the name because it looked good.

BY NICK COTRUFO

Album: *Now We Are Free*
Label: Facedown
Release Date: March 27, 2012
Members: Lazarus Rios, vocals; Alfie Tovar, guitar; J.C Villarreal, bass; Elijah Martinez, drums
RIYL: Mychidren Mybride, Living Sacrifice, Hatebreed
facebook.com/leadersmetal

LEADERS

Later this month Facedown's newest band, Leaders (formerly known as Allornothing), will release their first full-length album, titled *Now We Are Free*. With only one album released so far, they will hit the road and do Facedown Fest and they hope to do more tours. I had the opportunity to speak to frontman, Lazarus Rios, about Leaders and what they hope to accomplish with their band. After about thirty minutes on the phone, I could tell he was a genuine guy who had a true passion for hardcore and Christ. Here's what he had to say about Leaders:

Where did you get the new name?
Well, we were doing a band before, called Allornothing and we had a few member changes last year and we wanted to change the name, but we wanted to wait to change the name until a label had picked us up. One of the tracks was called "Leaders" and we were just like, "Hey, why not Leaders?" We want to (not to sound too full of ourselves) be like leaders of the pack.

What are your goals for 2012?
Tour. Our goal is to tour as much as possible. We want to play our music live and get the music and message across.

What is the concept of the album?
It's about change and walking confidently. With God anything can change. It won't be easy. The main thing throughout the album is getting caught up with the worldly things, but in the end God is there for you. In the end God is saying, "I'm here." Keep your eyes on God. If it wasn't for God, we wouldn't be here. Even the art on the cover of the album intertwines. It's a picture of a man walking out of shadows of death and treachery and into the light. It symbolizes that Christ is always there and you can always go to Him. These days hardcore bands want to be tough, but there's no reason behind the lyrics.

What are your musical influences?
Well, our guitar player listens to A LOT of Hatebreed and Living Sacrifice. We like a lot of metal and hardcore. We REALLY like hardcore.

What are your thoughts about getting to play Facedown Festival?
I think it's awesome! We're really stoked. We're stoked to be part of the Facedown family and meet everybody. We're grateful to be a part of it. Just to be with all the bands that are on the label is great. These are my friends and they're awesome people. We're actually really good friends with In The Midst of Lions.

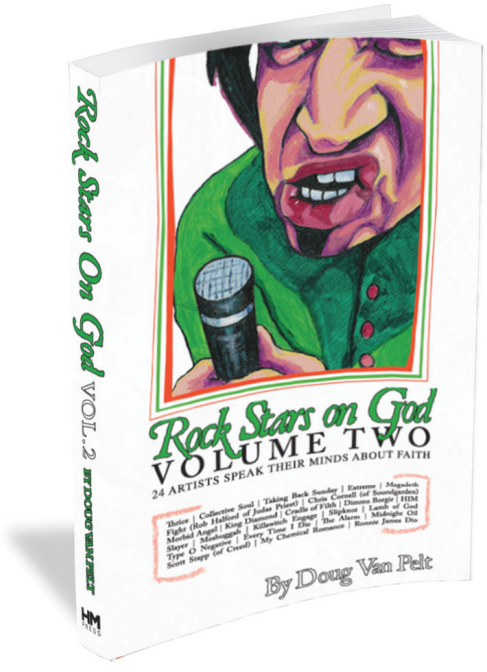
Is there anything that you want to convey to your fans?
We hope we get to meet everybody. We hope that our live show conveys the passion for what we do. We hope that people can hear our music and know that we're a Christian band. We're not ashamed to say that on stage. We want to help people and spread the Word of God. I've always talked about God on stage and I'm not gonna stop now. We hope the fans buy the CD.

Do you guys have any ideas for a second album yet? I know it's early.
At the moment, no. We finished writing the album and we were just like, "Aaaahhhhh," sigh of relief. We're probably gonna start writing again in the middle of this year and we wanna just improve on our sound without actually changing it.

Lazarus, thank you so much for doing this interview for HM and we look forward to hearing more music from Leaders in the future!
As do we. Look for us on tour!

BY NICK COTRUFO

Finally releasing this month!



Volume 2 of the popular *Rock Stars on God* series. This collection of 25 interviews from the pages of HM Magazine features:

Thrice, Collective Soul, Taking Back Sunday, Extreme, Megadeth, Fight (Rob Halford, Judas Priest), Chris Cornell (Soundgarden), Morbid Angel, King Diamond, Cradle of Filth, Dimmu Borgir, HIM, Slayer, Meshuggah, Killswitch Engage, Slipknot, Lamb of God, Type O Negative, Every Time I Die, The Alarm, Midnight Oil, Scott Stapp (Creed), My Chemical Romance, Ronnie James Dio.

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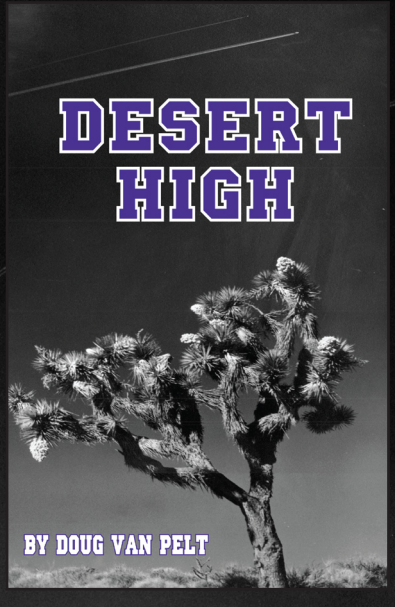


HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL,
flight testing & TIME TRAVEL?
read it all in the book *Desert High*
HM Editor Doug Van Pelt's first novel

DesertHighBook.com

I FOUND OUT ABOUT THE BURIAL AFTER THEY GOT SIGNED, WHICH WAS RIGHT BEFORE CORNERSTONE 2010. CONSIDERING THE TRA FACEDOWN AND STRIKE FIRST RECORDS, I FIG LISTEN. (SOME I LIKE AND SOME I DON'T...) UP ONE OF THOSE BANDS I REALLY DID NOT CAR I DID, HOWEVER, HANG OUT WITH THEM.

I was surprised that Todd, their guitar player, was married and that his wife had been very supportive of this band that had been touring for years and was just then getting their big break. Over the past few years they worked hard and toured as much as they could. Last year they had some trying times – losing a guitar player and having a great guy, Elisha, fill in for their tour to Facedown Fest and back home. One the way back home their van finally died on them. They cut the tour short. Once they got home, their vocalist quit. While looking for a new vocalist, Elisha stepped up to the plate and filled in.

I watched them last year both at Facedown Fest and at Cornerstone. It was different both times, though I did like them better with Elisha out front. Earlier this year I found out that they where going to spend a month recording a new record for their debut record on Facedown, called *Lights and Perfections*. In early February, Facedown released a press statement about The Burial moving up from Strike First to Facedown. I was blown away by their new single, called "Pearls; The Frailty of Matter." I think this new record will put them on the map and show us why they are now sitting at the big boy's table.

Last year you guys had a rough year – with losing your vocalist and a van – but it was also a step-up to Facedown and a new direction for the band with Elisha taking over vocals and lead guitar. How does the light at the end of the tunnel look for you guys with this new record?
It looks great! We are super stoked with the new line-up and can't wait to hit the road.

You guys spent a month at the beginning of the year recording *Lights and Perfections* at Random Awesome studios. Did the process go a lot smoother or was it more hectic than it was for *The Winepress* sessions? Were there things you got to do this time around that you guys didn't get to last time?
Everything went super smooth. Josh is a great person to work with. We used real drums and real guitar amps on this, so it's a lot more organic sounding. We actually got done tracking over a week ahead of schedule, so that left a lot of time for mixing and *Skyrim*. This time around, we had a lot more time to write and were able to do pre-production for the whole thing, so we knew what we wanted and didn't have to waste time in the actual studio to see if something worked or not.

What was difference with writing *Lights and Perfections* than *The Winepress*?
As stated before, we had way more time to write. With Elisha coming on board, he got on a roll and started cranking out song after song, so we had a lot more structured material to work with, rather than just trying to piece together a bunch of riffs.

Every band always puts out a really strong track for a single. For a talented band like you guys, the single is never the best track on the record. What is the best track on this new record, and what makes it so special to you?
Man, it's hard to say. It varies from day to day for me. I honestly am happy and proud of every song on the album.

ACK RECORD OF BANDS ON URED I WOULD GIVE THEM A ON FIRST LISTEN, THEY WERE E FOR.

I saw that the analog master did not make it to Facedown okay. Was the label able to make it work, or did you guys have to get a back-up master? What format did you guys get to the label that made it okay?
Ha ha, that was just a joke that Josh sent to Facedown.

I saw that you guys are going to tour with Hope For The Dying to Facedown Fest and back home. How stoked are you guys to play FDF as well as other Facedown nights at other festivals, like Cornerstone, this year?
We are beyond stoked and blessed to be a part of any of it. HFTD are all awesome dudes and so much fun to tour with.

Who would you guys like to tour with on this record cycle?
As They Sleep, Living Sacrifice, Wretched, ITMOL and The Faceless, would be sweet.

With the new style from *The Winepress* to *Lights and Perfections*, what do you think some of your favorite songs to play live off the new record will be?
We took a day off in the middle of recording to play a show with Still Remains and played some of the material for the first time. "Lights," "Wisdom" and "Perfections." "Perfections" was probably my favorite of the night. I am really stoked to play "Apathy and Petition" live.

I have seen that there are a lot of Facedown supporters who have never heard of you guys that are really digging the new song, "Pearls; The Frailty of Matter," and have become a fan of the band. Are you guys surprised that people are taking to the new side of you guys?
We have been blown away by the response we have been getting from it ... we were really not expecting it.

What are we going to see from you guys this year as a band?
We are going to be hitting the road hard, so expect to see us somewhere close to you.

Have you guys planned on a music video for *Lights and Perfections*? What would you like to do that bands have not done? What are things you do not want to do that you have seen bands play out in music videos?
We don't have any official plans as of yet. It's really hard to make an interesting video without a fairly large budget. I do not want to make a cheesy video just for the sake of making one.

If The Burial gets a good hand dealt to them and gets on some tours with some big bands, I think they can become a Christian metal heavy-hitter. I believe one day they will be legends, along with Living Sac, As I Lay Dying, Extol and many others. These guys put everything they had into this record and it shows. I know they will be setting the bar high at Facedown Fest this spring. This band is one not to be overlooked anymore. They are some of the nicest guys I have ever had the privilege to spend time with. This is the season for them to be able to live the dream.

✖

BY ROB SHAMELESS

"SOMEWHERE IN ALL THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE LAST FEW YEARS, OUR BAND HAS GONE THROUGH SOME EMOTIONAL METAMORPHOSES. WE'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO MAKE MUSIC THAT HAS WIDESPREAD, LASTING IMPACT. BUT, BECAUSE OF THE MOUNTAINS WE HAVE BEEN CLIMBING AND FACING DOWN, THIS TIME IT WAS THE PAIN IN OUR GUT THAT MOTIVATED US TO DESIRE TO MAKE REAL MUSIC THAT WAS HONEST AND POWERFUL, REGARDLESS OF THE PRESSURES OF WHAT THE INDUSTRY MIGHT BE LOOKING FOR."
–DAWN MICHELE

Artists in any medium will agree that their most prolific works were born out of pain. Fireflight vocalist Dawn Michele checks in with HM to discuss her band's newly released album, *NOW,* and the origin of its songs.

What kind of buzz has the single and video for "Stay Close" generated with your fans and listeners in general?
The single hit No. 1 on the Christian Rock Radio along with seeing around 5 million impressions in the short time it's been out. The music video seems to be resonating with fans. It premiered on Air1.com less than a month ago and since the premier it's had more than 37,000 views. We're excited about the buzz it's building.

What is different about the songs on *NOW* in comparison to previous Fireflight albums?
I would say that the lyrics of *NOW* are more raw than we have let show in the past. More than once we raised an eyebrow as we were writing, wondering if they would make it through to print, per se. But, sometimes reality is extreme and ugly and we felt like if you hide that, you lose the contrast to how strikingly beautiful the love and mercy of God are.

How did the making of this record differ from the other ones?
We worked with producer Jasen Rauch for the first time on this one. He's an up-and-coming producing genius and a personal friend, so obviously we were stoked. We had great results with our producer from the last two albums, Rob Hawkins, who was up-and-coming when we recorded *Unbreakable* with him, so we weren't worried about taking a chance. It's always interesting to learn a new person and experience the creative process through a different perspective and methods.

What were some of your own personal experiences that spurred you on to write the new material?
In the last several years, my family has been through an intense emotional struggle, which still continues. My little brother was diagnosed with a brain tumor at fifteen, which sent my family into a panic. I had another little brother that passed away when I was very young and we were all catapulted back into the pain and heartbreak of that original experience. He had surgery and the cancer was removed and, thank God, he is doing great now. But, things have continued to be difficult, as the following year my parents went through a messy divorce, which continues to be a struggle as my family learns how to adjust.

Where was your heart when you wrote "He Weeps?"
When your heart is breaking and your world is caving in, we can't help but ask, "Where is God now? How could He let this happen?" We talk to so many people online who are struggling, too, and it's the same story. As we were writing "He Weeps," our guitarist Justin, was facing one of the greatest emotional struggles of his life, as he had to stand by and watch his wife be hospitalized for Anorexia. Having never struggled with it before, it seemed so unreal that she could be at the point of needing help to get back to a healthy weight. Eight months later she is doing much better, but the fact is much like the different struggles we all deal with, we will all have to continue to face them down every day. As we searched for God's heart

in all this pain, ultimately we were led to the story of when Jesus wept with Mary and Martha at the death of their brother. Even though Jesus knew He was about to do one of the greatest miracles of the Bible and bring their brother back to life, He felt their great loss at that moment so completely that He wept with them. We believe that no one suffers like our Father God when His children are hurting and when we are crying, He's crying too.

"Stronger Than You Think" is directed at Satan, right?
"Stronger Than You Think" is about the journey to realizing that Satan's only power comes from confusion. If the enemy can convince us we are powerless, then we become his victim, but his only strength is not real power, it's only a mirage and a trick. But really, we all have met people who let the enemy work through them to destroy the heart and strength of others. That's what brings the bite of personal experience to the song, I think.

What is the significance of *NOW,* both the album and title track?
"NOW" is the album's call to action. There are powerful forces, like fear, that keep us from moving forward in life, because of previous hurt or disappointment. How can we ever take hold of God's promises if we aren't willing to step out in faith and move beyond our circumstances? We have to keep on fighting ... no excuses. We hope this song and album will encourage listeners to make the changes they need to make and live the life that God has called them to live.

What is the most meaningful track on the album to you?
"Keeping Me Alive." It's brutally honest about things that we usually lie to ourselves about. We say we trust God and want to be free and open. But the truth is, that deep down, we are afraid to be truly open with anyone and we'd rather isolate and protect our heart and just do whatever we think it takes to get what we want out of this life. But we run into dead-end after dead-end, trying to get things our way and we end up hating ourselves most of all. But God's grace stays constant no matter where we run and true life comes from abandoning ourselves to Him.

What is your favorite memory verse in the Bible?
2 Corinthians 1:3-4. "Praise be to our God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who comforts us in all of our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the same comfort we have received."

Can you recall what the most gratifying experience has been for you as a performer?
There was once a girl who came to one of our shows with her sister. She didn't say much, but she started writing us online. She was hiding so much pain and self-destruction. We talked for, like, a year and over time I watched her grow and heal and become like a new girl. One day I visited her profile randomly and it had transformed from dark and scary to bright and beautiful. It made me so happy to see she was experiencing life in an all-new way.

✖

BY CHARLIE STEFFENS

BAPTIZED IN FILTH, THE NEW IMPENDING DOO ALBUM, "REPRESENTS THE MINDLESS INDULGE AND SELF-WORSHIP IN THE VILE WORLD WE LI EXPLAINS BASSIST DAVID SITTIG. "THIS ALBUM IS TO SCARE THE HELL OUT OF YOU."

The band will release their brand new full-length album on March 13, 2012. Produced by the very capable hands of Andreas Magnusson (The Black Dahlia Murder) and Machine, this is the band's fourth full length and most ferocious effort to date.

Mychildren Mybride singer Matthew Hasting and guitarist Robert Bloomfield tag-teamed to grill Impending Doom for the following interview/conversation:

You guys have three, going on four, releases so far. What is the process for you guys when writing? Is it a lot easier being that you've released a few albums or is it hard to try to keep things refreshing?
It doesn't get easier, but it's also not difficult to keep things refreshing. We know now better than ever how to write an Impending Doom record. The fun part is trying to out-do the last album and keep things sounding fresh and new and we believe we did that with this record. We brought back a lot of the dark sounds and really heavy riffs/vibe of *The Serpent Servant* record, but also did some experimenting like we do on each of our albums to try new things and keep things interesting all around.

We've been friends for a very long time and both our bands are no stranger to controversy, but what are the reasons behind naming your album *Baptized in Filth*?
In a nutshell the meaning behind the title is about being so consumed in this world and worldly things. This world is dark and full of filth – that's just the truth. This record is meant to scare the hell out of you, literally.

Explain a day in the life of an Impending Doom member while on tour.
Well, each dude is a little different. Brook and Btown (Brandon Trahan) like to get up early, get coffee and breakfast; where Cory and myself tend to stay up very late and sleep until sound-check, ha ha. But all around after sound-check we'll grab some food, relax in our dressing room and slowly get ready and pumped for that night's show.

We've done multiple tours together, which was your favorite and why?
The *Constellations Tour* in 2009, for sure! That tour just all around was very solid and fun. Everyone on that package was friends and the shows were incredible. Great times!

Who's your favorite MCMB member? Why?
We actually hate you all ;) ha ha. But, seriously, we can't pick. We have grown to love each one of you dudes.

Impending Doom is now a four-piece. Can you explain why you guys decided to keep it a four-piece?
Well, we have been a four-piece for almost two years now. We have tried a few different ways to make our live sound as massive as possible and over time have figured out how to make one guitar sound like three. Another reason is the way we write and do things as a band right now are awesome; and bringing another dude into the picture could be a bad thing. At least for now we love being a four-piece.

If you had to change your band name tomorrow, what would it be and why?
Norsk. Because he's my alter-ego and he'll kill you.

You get the chance to tour with any three bands, who are they? MCMB better be one of them!
Slipknot, Lamb of God, and Deftones.

We get grouped together in the same genre of music often... Anything for fans to explain to them how different we really are?
Well, our sounds are very different in my opinion, but at the end of the day we are both Christian metal bands. If people want to get technical, you can call us a "deathcore" band and mcmb a "metalcore" band, but to us all we are is a band who loves writing and playing heavy music. You can call us deathcore, metalcore, Christcore, heavy metal, death metal, gorship metal or whatever else you can think of. We don't mind. We're just a heavy band with a message.

If you could cover any song by any band and perform it with them live what song with what band?
Btown would say: "Bloody Cape" by Deftones. Brook would say: "Purity" by Slipknot. Cory would say: "Weird Fishes/ Arpeggi" by Radiohead. And I would say: "Vicarious" by Tool.

What does the future hold for Impending Doom? Four records deep and extensive touring under your belt... What's next?
Big things! We have a very big year ahead of us with the *Metal Alliance Tour* next month, followed by *Warped Tour* this summer, and many other things I cannot discuss at this time (smiles), but Impending Doom will be in your area sometime this year, so come out and headbang with us!

✖

INTERVIEWED BY MYCHILDREN MYBRIDE

M
ENCE
VE IN,"
MEANT

Favorite Band:
SLEEPING GIANT

RUNNER-UPS:
#2 OH, SLEEPER | #3 THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

Favorite Bassist:

LEE MARIE HOSTETTER

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE HM READERS' POLL

RUNNER-UPS:

#2 JONATHAN KINDLER | #3 ROY MITCHELL CARDENAS

Fav. Drummer:
MATT GREINER

RUNNER-UPS:
#2 SETH HOSTETTER | #3 TED KIRKPATRICK

Photo: Michael Todaro

Fav. Guitarist:
JB BRUBAKER

RUNNER-UPS:
#2 LAMENTOR | #3 BRIAN "HEAD" WELCH

Photo: Michael Todaro

Favorite Singer:
MICHAEL SWEET

RUNNER-UPS:
#2 RYAN CLARK | #3 JOSH SCOGIN

Favorite Album:

OH, SLEEPER – *CHILDREN OF FIRE*

RUNNER-UPS:

#2 Sleeping Giant – *Kingdom Days in an Evil Age*
#3 Hands – *Give Me Rest*

Favorite Album Cover:

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA – *DEAD THRONE*

RUNNER-UPS:

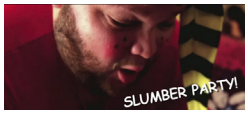
#2 Becoming The Archetype – *Celestial Completion*
#3 Oh, Sleeper – *Children of Fire*

Favorite Video:

RED – "FEED THE MACHINE"

RUNNER-UPS:

#2 A Plea For Purging – "Heart of a Child"
#3 Demon Hunter – "LifeWar"



Favorite Live Show:

THE CHARIOT

RUNNER-UPS:

#2 SKILLET
#3 FOR TODAY

Favorite New Band:

ICON FOR HIRE

RUNNER-UPS:

#2 GIDEON
#3 BEHOLD THE KINGDOM

Fav. Keyboardist/Programmer:

PAUL MEANY

RUNNER-UPS:

#2 JAMES BANEY
#3 ADAM YOUNG

Favorite Lyricist:

ANDREW SCHWAB

RUNNER-UPS:

#2 MATTIE MONTGOMERY
#3 DUSTIN KENSRUE

Favorite Unsigned Band:

FIVE IRON FRENZY

RUNNER-UPS:

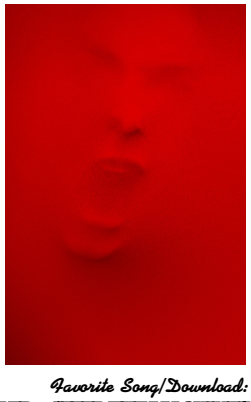
#2 THE WEDDING
#3 LIGHT UP THE DARKNESS

Favorite HM Magazine Article:

THE CHARIOT (The Chariot)

RUNNER-UPS:

#2 HASTE THE DAY (Doug Van Pelt)
#3 A PLEA FOR PURGING (Levi Macallister)



Favorite Song/Download:

RED – "FEED THE MACHINE"

RUNNER-UPS:

#2 BRIAN "HEAD" WELCH – "PARALYZED"
#3 OH, SLEEPER – "CHILDREN OF FIRE"

Fav. Merch/T-shirt Design:

SLEEPING GIANT – Destroy

RUNNER-UPS:

#2 LEVI THE POET – Monologs
#3 FOR TODAY – *Devastator* Eagle

mcmb: catchi

BANDS OFTEN USE A SELF-TITLED ALBUM TO STAMP SOMETHING – A NEW BEGINNING, A NEW SOUND, A CAREER-DEFINING BATCH OF SONGS BY WHICH ALL OF THEIR OTHER WORK CAN BE MEASURED. FOR THE ALABAMA-BASED MYCHILDREN MYBRIDE, THEIR NEW EPONYMOUS ALBUM REPRESENTS ALL OF THESE THINGS AND MORE – MARKING BOTH A NEW CHAPTER FOR THE MEMBERS AND THE ADVENT OF A REFINED SOUND THEY'VE BEEN CHASING SINCE THE BAND'S INCEPTION.

Impending Doom: Why did you guys decide to self-title the new album? Any story behind that?
Robert Bloomfield: It marks our new, improved sound and defines what we are as a band now. Some people seem to always hope that bands they really like will keep on making their first record. Not us. We will always keep evolving our sound to the best of our ability. When I looked back at most bands in history, and I don't put us in this category, but bands like Metallica, Nirvana, Avenged Sevenfold, Led Zeppelin, Van Halen, all of them made a change to their sound with their self-titled albums. We saw it fitting.

Matthew Hasting: We decided that self-titling an album makes a big statement about it. It tells people that we've almost started over, that there's a new beginning to MCMB. Some bands' greatest albums are self-titled, and we feel like this is our best and wanted to do the same. Plus I think it's a really cool thing that bands can do, and something not many are bold enough to try these days.

What are some goals MCMB hopes to achieve on this new record cycle?
RB: We hope people like what we created as much as we do. We spent a lot of time making this record. A lot of trial and error, too. It felt like a house of cards in a wind storm, ha ha. At any moment we could have fallen and all gone our separate ways, but we put a lot of differences aside and focused on the music. We put all the emotion and energy into the music and it came out to be the

ng the sound

INTERVIEWED BY IMPENDING DOOM

best thing we've created. On the other side of things, we're trying to play some new countries that we have yet to play. Japan is a priority. Europe and Australia also. Hopefully keep the machine running that is MCMB.

MH: We want to travel and tour as much as we ever have in the past and reach as many new fans in whatever countries that we go to. We tried a lot of new ideas on this record and really feel that a lot of new people will love the new music that may have been turned off by our older albums. We can't wait to start playing this new stuff!

Photos: Jeremy Saffer

Did you guys do anything different this time around with writing the new record? Any new approaches?

RB: So many new things it's crazy, ha ha. This is the first record where I used my actual stage sound on a recording. I set up my entire stage rig to get the exact sound we have on stage on a record. We used Coupe guitars that are a longer scale to reach some really high notes for some leads. But the main thing was how the record was actually written and structured. We showed up to the studio with, like, eight skeletons and as soon as we showed Zeuss (producer Chris "Zeuss" Harris), he was like, "These aren't actual songs that will stand on their own, guys. You need more material. Get down in the live room and start jamming." We were like, "What do you mean 'Jam'?!" Ha ha. As a metal band it's

pretty hard to just jam on a riff right there on the spot. But we went down there and started piecing parts of riffs we liked together and before we knew it songs were being made left and right. Sometimes three songs a day. It was a totally new experience for us. All the pressure of finishing the album on time as well as all the differences in creativity. It made for an awesome record.

MH: With the new record things were completely different. Since the band's beginning we haven't really written as a "band." One or two of the members would share ideas via email and that's basically how everything was done. With *Unbreakable* Brian Hood wrote all of it, with my production help on most of the songs, and my lyrics on top of them. With *Lost Boys* we had Robert Bloomfield and Daniel Alvarado writing all of it on their own time and then bringing new material to the table via email. With this album everything was much different. Like Robert said, we arrived in Massachusetts with material written by him, Mathis Arnell and Hunter Walls – all on our computers like before. The first day we showed our studio engineer, Zeuss, the material and he said we had a lot of work to do and then ordered us down into the main room to "jam" our material and write as a band. This might seem normal and strike anyone as the "way" to write a record, but in today's electronic world everything is usually written on a MacBook in some sort of recording software program. Scared and clueless about how to write together and about how to mesh all of this raw material into something worth labeling a song was rough, but after the initial first-day-of-school awkwardness was over we started getting in the swing of things and it became very natural. We were writing a few songs a day, enough to pick and choose what would make the cut of our new album. Needless to say, we'll be sticking to this new writing style on the next MCMB release.

"On Wings of Integrity Part 2" is an awesome concept as the first single for the new album. How has the feedback been on the new material so far?
RB: You know, I think I was against this idea when it got brought up. I'm the guy who's all about going into the new directions, full speed ahead. But Matthew thought it would be a good idea since our sound has evolved. We wanted people to know that we haven't forgotten our fans that put us where we are. Without the success of *Unbreakable*, we probably wouldn't be at the level we're at. The positive feedback is pouring in, but just like with any and every band, haters are gonna hate!

MH: We wanted to release a song people would be familiar with. Something that they already knew the name of and a song that was an addition to one of our most highly praised songs in the past. We've received a lot of comments about how much everyone loves the lyrics and the new direction we're going. We really listened to our fans after we released *Lost Boys*, and heard loud and clear what they liked and disliked about that record. We kept that in mind when we wrote the new album, and are happy that everyone loves it as much as we do.

A genie reveals itself to you and your one wish is to pick any active band to support on a major tour. Who is it and why?
RB: Okay, I have two parts to this. In America it would be Lamb of God. Why? Because they're like the Pantera of our time. And in Europe it'd be Rammstein. Their shows are so insane, it's funny. We'd probably get booed off stage, but it's worth a shot! They draw like 50,000 people in Europe. That's a sea of people...

MH: Wow, that's hard ... everyone in our band listens to such different music and would have a totally different answer for this question, but if I had to pick one I think everyone would agree with, it would probably be Slipknot. They have one of

"Zeuss was like, 'These aren't actual songs that will stand on their own, guys. You need more material. Get down in the live room and start jamming.'"

the biggest fan bases in heavy music, so supporting them would put us in front of a completely new audience and fan base. Also everyone in MCMB has been obsessed with them at least once in our lives, ha ha.

What do you do when you aren't touring, writing music or in the studio with MCMB? Any side projects or other music-related endeavors?
RB: I'm usually either writing music, riding my motorcycle or working. We rarely get enough time off to actually do anything, to be honest. But after we finished the record we took two months off and that's the longest period of time we've taken off since 2006. I kinda didn't know what to do with myself. I got a couple jobs, 'cause it's always nice actually having some money to eat and not worrying about bills. My roommate and I write music when we have some time. More of a rock-type band. A lot like Jimmy Eat World-type stuff. Lately I've been building my new pedal board, which is super exciting for me, ha ha.

MH: Currently no other music projects under my belt, but I have been painting and selling prints of my art online [matthewhasting.bigcartel.com for more info on that]. Also Robert Bloomfield and I have a clothing company called "Vicious World." [You can check that out at theviciousworld.com]

Since MCMB and Impending Doom have probably played close to 100 shows together, what's your favorite tour or festival memory with us <3 ?
RB: That's a tough one! There's so many to chose from, ha ha. The past two tours we did together were awesome. The ABR tour and/or co-headliner. The co-headliner was fun, because we played a couple shows in Canada, in the middle of nowhere, where only like 20 kids showed up, but yet we still managed to have a good time. Nothing better then being able to travel around the country and other countries with some of your best buds! It's an ultimate party every day and night, ha ha.

MH: None of them ... KIDDING ... that's a tough question, we honestly have been touring together for so long, it's hard to pick a single show or tour that stands out as the "favorite." The first *Scream the Prayer Tour* was definitely very memorable, though. I think we became really close that tour and some of my favorite memories were that summer.

Out of all the tours MCMB has done in your career, which tour was your all-around favorite?
RB: We toured with Unearth in 2007 and that was probably the most fun. Everyone was so down-to-earth and fun. Bury Your Dead and As Blood Runs Black were on that tour. It was quite an experience, too. It was our first "real" tour with tour books and bus parking and people running around getting things in order. We were like a bunch of newbies, but all the bands were awesome to us. We actually still talk with all those guys. Great dudes.

MH: This question is WAY too hard for me to answer. Every tour you meet so many new people, and have so many new adventures, ha ha. I've been in the band since the beginning and have been touring for eight years straight!

Does MCMB have an absolute favorite city/state/country that you love to perform in?
RB: San Antonio, TX, is probably the best place to play in the country. Those kids just love music. Doesn't matter if you guys played there a week prior, kids will still come out and go nuts for you like it's your first time being there. Absolutely amazing scene there. Southern California isn't far behind. When we play San Diego or Anaheim, kids do some of the craziest stuff, ha ha. A lot of great memories at Chain Reaction. The Doom/MCMB tour went there and was insane! I had kids jumping off my pedal board...

MH: We absolutely love Texas and performing there. If MCMB were running for president, we would definitely get that state's most electoral votes, ha ha! Maybe we should run for president ... hmm.

Best food to eat while on tour? IHOP doesn't count :)
RB: I HATE DENNY'S! I'm not even a fan of IHOP really, ha ha. Too many years of eating there and now I cannot stand it. We actually

Live photos by DVP

do a lot of Yelp-ing to find some decent food. We have a bunch of vegans and vegetarians, so we find a few good veggie places. Chicago Diner in Chicago is pretty awesome. I'm not even vegetarian and I love eating there. But overall, I think Chipotle is probably the place we go to most often. It's fast, easy and healthier than most.

MH: I love pizza... Joe loves Chipotle... Robert loves anything that's not fast food... Hunter loves anything ... and Mathis loves Whole Foods. But, on average, we're at a Chipotle four times a week.

Now is Matt more along the lines of a *Twilight* vampire, or a *True Blood* vampire? Ha.
RB: It's funny you bring this up! He doesn't even watch *True Blood*! But he read all those dang *Twilight* books in, like, a weekend. Swears he hates the movies, though. I never read the *Twilight* books or watched the movies, but I am a pretty big fan of *True Blood* – just a hilarious take on vampires to me. Plus, Jessica is a babe. But, basically, he's a *Twilight* vamp, but we all wish he was more of a *True Blood* vamp.

MH: When will this whole vampire thing stop?! ha ha ha ... neither – more of a *30 Days Of Night* kind. ;)

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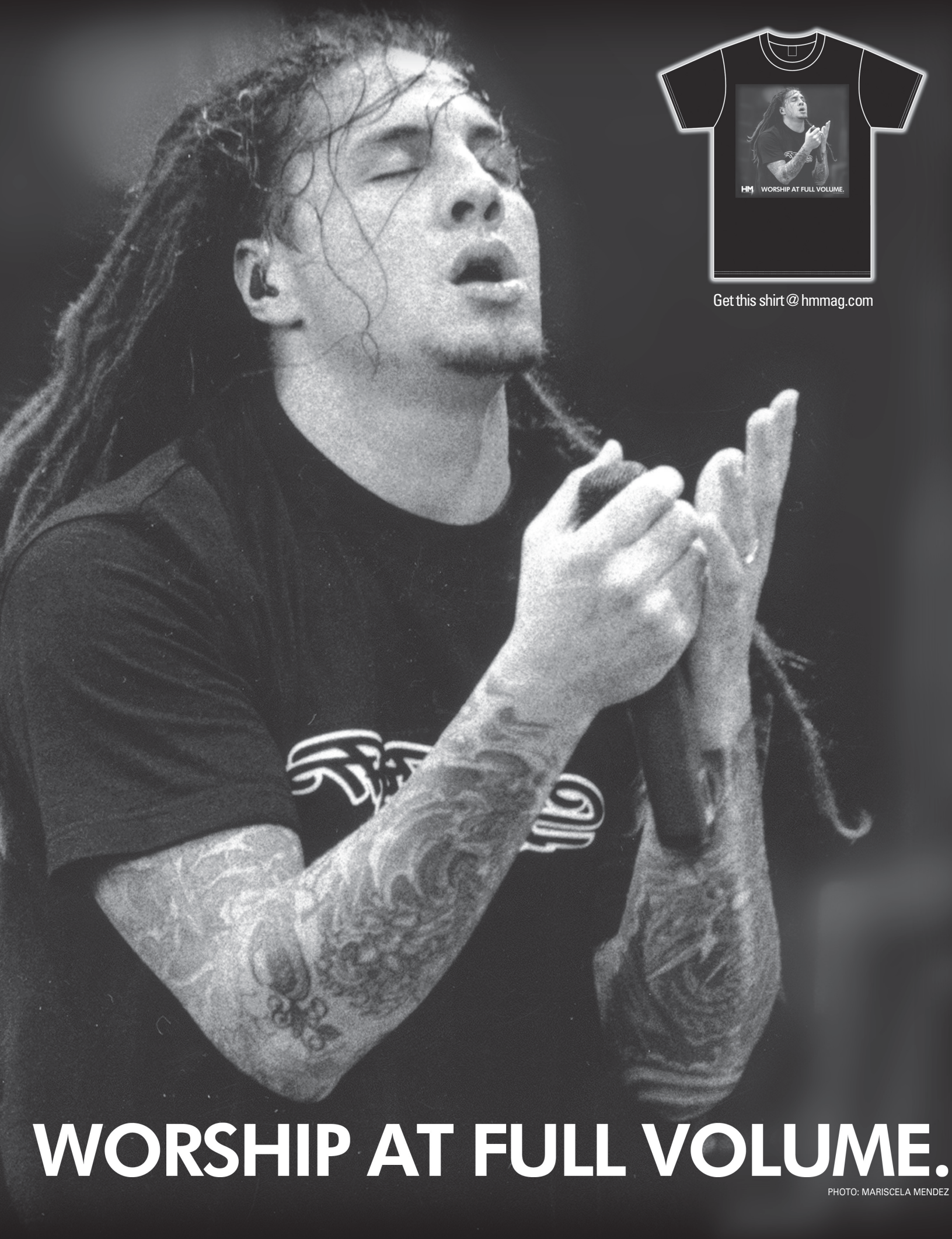
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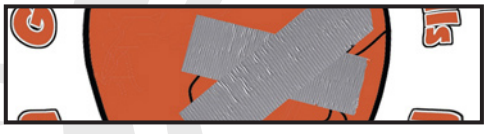

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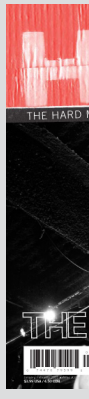

#14

CLASSIC BACK ISSUES -

[this is just a small sample of what's

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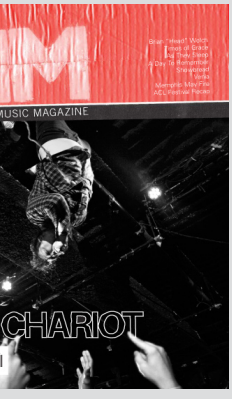

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Album reviews

45 ALBUMS 48 GEAR, GADGETS, COMICS, BOOKS & FILM

IMPENDING DOOM

BAPTIZED IN FILTH

After a year of brutal tours and a record label change, Impending Doom is back with their fourth full-length album Baptized in Filth. This album is heavy.

Actually heavy would be an understatement. The riffs are intense and the breakdowns are so low and good for straight up moshing. The lyrics are powerful and very spiritual. While their last two albums were heavy and Christ centered, *Baptized in Filth* is an album not only for intense throwing down purposes, but also for listening enjoyment and intense study. Brooke Reeves (vocalist) even notes in an interview that this album is a lot darker. It's scary and eerie sounding. It's the perfect way to describe this album. It's very dark. The Spirit-filled lyrics aren't candy-coated at all. There's plenty of murder and horror in this album to keep all the metalcore kids wanting more. This is easily the best album that Impending has put out. It's a flawless work of art. Brook Reeves' vocals have come a long way from the days of doing pig squeal grindcore. Even in softer songs, like "My Light Unseen," his vocals are powerful. They're not scary low, but they're strong and metal. I recommend that Impending Doom fans not miss this album and get the word out that Impending Doom is back and they're here to slay everything in their path. This is gorship at its finest.

~~[EONE] NICK COTRUFO (THIS MOMENT IN HARDCORE)~~

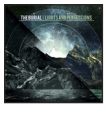
Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

MYCHILDREN MYBRIDE

S/T

The inner spirit of this Alabama-based metal act has become self aware and has broken loose from its chains. It seems as though more thought was put into this album musically and lyrically. The guitars don't hold back with a continuous balance of crunchy breakdowns and technical yet melodic riffs. Vocalist Matthew Hastings, as expected, brings forth his full blunt lyrics with a vengeful tone of voice. Fans of *Unbreakable* will quickly admire this self-titled release due to it containing crowd opening breakdowns and hardcore dancing rhythms. One factor that jumped out the most was the dark vibe this album gave off. If you listen carefully, there are hints of whispering vocals and eerie sounds, similar to that of Korn. Not to worry though, there are no drop-A-tuned hip-hop sounding guitar songs. MCMB has no doubt raised their bar at the highest level thus far and it leaves me aching to see what more will come from them. Be sure to catch these guys live this year, the new material will sound good live. ~~[SOLID STATE] DANIEL GARCIA~~



THE BURIAL

LIGHTS AND PERFECTIONS

Evidently, from the sound of the nine songs on their third album, The Burial stuck with a proven formula: go heavy or go home. *Lights and Perfections* is an adventurous record that hard music fans can really dig into, especially those who could care less about hearing sappy power ballads. Loaded with mind-blowing guitar work characteristic of Carcass and Arch Enemy, the Indiana foursome went a smidgen more technical with this one than on their previous efforts, while not withholding the loud, lacerating delivery that sets them apart from their contemporaries. "Lights" starts it off, straightaway displaying Kaleb Luebchow's exemplary drumming and the attack of guitarists Todd Hatfield and Elisha Mullins. "Salt and Wrath," with its brutality and frenetic rhythm, will no doubt start the pits circling, should it be included on The Burial's setlist. Crushing. Edifying. A great album. ~~[FACEDOWN] CHARLIE STEFFENS~~

AARON GILLESPIE

ECHO YOUR SONG [LIVE] EP

It should come as no surprise that this live worship album from the former singing drummer from Underoath would sound authentic – both in the sonic and intangible spiritual/moving emotion categories. Dude proves to be an effective worship leader. Showmanship can certainly account for a lot here, but there's some charged atmosphere emitted here and it's bathed in some lush, cool sonics. Half of the six songs are Hillsong covers and the other half are from Gillespie's *Anthem Song* 2011 album. ~~[BEC] DOUG VAN PELT~~

DENISON WITMER

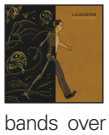
THE ONES WHO WAIT

There are few indie artists that can crossover and be loved by Christian and secular fans alike. Witmer has eight previous records under his belt on almost every label that signs indie artists (that) we here at HM work with. Released on Denison's close friend Sufjan Stevens' Asthmatic Kitty label, this one is nothing short of an amazing indie record. With songs about loss, hope, as well love and life, this record is one that is the soundtrack for long road trips – the seasons changing in life, the darkest and the brightest times. There is a reason why some say he is the next Elliot Smith. *The Ones Who Wait* keeps the '70s singer/songwriter's spirit alive and well. This record will surely be on top ten lists of 2012 – not just by Christian media, but secular as well. ~~[ASTHMATIC KITTY] ROB SHAMELESS~~

RUTH

PAYOLA

Ruth plays groovy indie rock you can slip into like a well-worn denim jacket. Singer/songwriter/guitarist Dustin Ruth and his other three Ruth comrades have just dropped their first album since the band's departure from Tooth & Nail a couple years back, entitled *Payola*. With this offering, Ruth diverts from standard verse/chorus traditional songwriting, while stacking up soaring melodies with well-knit musicianship. The radio-friendly bubblegum-smacker, "Darling Why" resembles the sound of *Secondhand Dreaming* very little, which came out in 2007, but maybe that's just artistic evolution. The pull of "Love and Craigslist" is like a sonic riptide with driving guitars, a solid bottom dished out by bassist Jesse Counts and drummer Ryan Peterson – all held together by a catchy storyline. The sparkling gem on *Payola* is "Want to be Alone" – an infectious tune of getting away from the hype and just letting go. The album is loaded with hearty hooks, but its simply worded repetitions are its weakness. ~~[HYPE MUSIC/MTV] CHARLIE STEFFENS~~



LEADERS

NOW WE ARE FREE

Facedown is always really good at finding great Southern Cali metalcore bands over the years – starting with Sinai Beach and Falling Cycle in the early 2000s. Now, in the mid-to-late era of metalcore, they found a seasoned band from Hollister named Leaders. For the past few years they have been going under the name ALLORNOTHING. One of the first bands Sonny from P.O.D. picked up to be a part of The Whosoever family – getting to play big shows like "One Love For Chi." With a new sound and the loss of some members, Leaders has emerged with their Facedown debut, *Now We Are Free*. Ten metalcore tracks for fans of Hatebreed and Living Sac. With heavy breakdowns and eerie leads, along with an anthem of liberation, this is a great record to give you a taste of what Facedown has up their sleeve for 2012. ~~[FACEDOWN] ROB SHAMELESS~~

FIREFLIGHT

NOW

It's difficult to get past the fact that Fireflight sounds like a kinder, gentler version of Skillet. Call them Skillet-lite, if you will. Vocalist Dawn Michele works up a healthy caterwaul now and again during *NOW*, but the band never brings the kind of heat that could really make this music catch fire. It all just sounds too scrubbed clean and youth group-ready. With that said, "He Weeps" is nevertheless a great, empathetic ballad. Christians need constant reminders that Jesus weeps both for them and with them. However, the listener is left wishing for more real, Skillet-like drama, and less dramatic posing. For instance, this album's title track comes off like latter day Billy Idol rock, fronted by a candy-sweetened Pat Benatar. Its words will fit nicely into a morning high school Sunday school lesson, but it reads more like the power of positive thinking to anybody outside the church. To which we say, 'Not now, thanks.' ~~[FLICKER] DAN MACINTOSH~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Impending Doom *Baptized in Filth*	04	05
Mychildren Mybride *S/T*	04	03*
The Burial *Lights and Perfections*	03*	04
Aaron Gillespie *Echo Your Song [Live]* EP	03*	
Denison Witmer *The Ones Who Wait*	03*	04
Ruth *Payola*	04	03
Leaders *Now We Are Free*	03*	03*
Fireflight *NOW*	03	02
John Mark McMillan *Economy*	04	03
Pioneer *S/T*	04	04
Before Their Eyes *Redemption*	03*	04
Steve Scott *Emotional Tourist*	04*	
Marvin Etzioni *Marvin Country!*	03	
Json *Growing Pains*	04	03*
Sent By Ravens *Mean What You Say*	03	03

JOHN MARK MCMILLAN

ECONOMY

In John Mark McMillan's artistic economy, there is room for multiple stylistic variations. He sounds like Bruce Springsteen during "Daylight," where the line, "We live on the edge of darkness" even sounds like something The Boss might write. Then on the title track, McMillan simultaneously filters both U2 and Arcade Fire. Such obvious influences are not such a bad thing, especially when they encompass a few of the greatest rock artists of our time. No matter what McMillan sings, however, his voice always retains world-weariness. Perhaps he's a contemporary musical weeping prophet, a la Jeremiah. Once again, that is not too bad a template to pattern one's self after. If your only John Mark McMillan association is "How He Loves," his much-covered worship song, this album may come as a revelation. While "Chemicals," hearkens back to the raw folk vibe of that famous song, much of the rest of this album is fairly expansive, sonically speaking. Overall, McMillan exhibits quite the robust economy. [INTEGRITY] DAN MACINTOSH

PIONEER

S/T

Once there was a band. They were good and had some fans. They changed their name and did not stay the same. Now they are headed for fortune and fame. Bad poetry aside, that is the story of the new Pioneer release. They used to be called News For Verona and, while they were okay, they definitely were not Pioneer. Now they are and there was more than a name change. They grew up. It is not a case of a complete sound reinvention, they did not go from metal to jazz, but simply matured. If only a name change would do that for all bands. The album opens with "Clarity," a short acoustic-based track, which is deceiving in that this is no boring singer songwriter record, but it's a sign of the new maturity and it quickly evolves into track two – "Lights," with a driving guitar riff and a cool alt-pop sensibility. They weave in and out of each subsequent track with hooks, rock guitars, powerful vocals and harmonies to create an overall feeling of a veteran arena band. The lyrics are spiritual, personal and show maturity beyond the songwriter's years. There are songs on this record like "Treason" and "Reaching" that reach toward epic alt-rock status ala Coldplay, U2 or the Killers. Comparisons have also been made to Relient K, The Fray and All American Rejects, but Pioneer is paving their own trail. "King In Rags," the final track, is a moving story of a soul adrift at sea and, unless you are made out of concrete, you will be moved. Pioneer is a band and an album on the brink of something big. To find out what, just take a listen to this fun, powerful release from a great band with a new name. [SLOSPEAK] DR. TONY SHORE

BEFORE THEIR EYES

REDEMPTION

With *Redemption*, Before Their Eyes have mostly dropped the schizo half-pop, half-hardcore division of their last album and returned to a heavier blend of post-hardcore. The first song following the intro, "Lies," might be the best song they've recorded – brooding pre-choruses, dark-but-memorable sung choruses building to a crushing conclusion. The album's lyrics tell of betrayal, loss and, ultimately, hope – common themes in the genre – but with moments of maturity ("Everything," "Surrender") you'd expect from a band on its fourth LP. "Revival" is the heaviest of the lot, with low-tuned guitars and insistent drum hits pushing the pace toward the final riff. The album's two poppiest tracks are the last two. "Faith" is a radio rocker, while "Alive" is the closest pop-wise this album gets to *Untouchable*'s "Sing to Me," though still with Anberlin-edged guitars. The last two would sound a bit out of place if you shuffled through the songs, but if you don't mind getting a few radio-rock choruses after your breakdowns, BTE have proven with this album they're quite good at both. [INVOGUE] COREY ERB

STEVE SCOTT

EMOTIONAL TOURIST

Arena Rock Recording Co. has done the music world justice once again. After releasing the brilliant Larry Norman anthology, they've honored a deserving musical genius/legend and served the public by choosing well from Scott's cadre of tunes. Here's a guy that somehow knew the craft of '80s Britpop like few others. "Love in the Western World," "Emotional Tourist," "Not A Pretty Picture" and "Ghost Train" are all hits that could've/should've/would've ruled MTV's airwaves in the decade of splashy colors. The crown jewel of this 15-track best-of, though, is the magical spoken-word "performance art" of "This Sad Music," which seemingly paints a didactic picture of a television preacher with a news report of whales beaching themselves – only to create a highly enjoyable experience in the process. Somehow, when the history of Christian rock is being written, this music must be included. [ARRCO] DOUG VAN PELT

MARVIN ETZIONI

MARVIN COUNTRY!

Talk about a party! This two-disc collection finds Etzioni jamming a dynamic spectrum of genres - from blues and country with even a bit of Zydeco thrown in. It's a fun listen for most of the 22 tracks, but the real treats are all the guest vocalists brought in for this. Maria McKee, Buddy Miller, Lucinda Williams, Steve Earle and more all get their shot in front of the mic. "Living Like A Hobo" (Buddy Miller's moment), "Where's Your Analog Spirit?" (with Shane Fontayne on vocals) and "Son of a Carpenter" are standout cuts worth checking out. [NINE MILE] DOUG VAN PELT

JSON

GROWING PAINS

The heavy guitar solo against an equally weighty beat concluding the intro' to rapper Json's latest longplayer may be bait enough for some of this mag's readers to check it out. In the bargain, however, those listeners accustomed to banging their heads may instead find themselves nodding their noggins instead to the glossy boom throughout much of *Growing Pains* and getting an ample earful of autobiographical, evangelistic and exegetical rhymes from an M.C. with an appealingly gruff East Coast-accented flow (he has since moved from his native Philly to Seattle, which provides for some of the album's lyrical grist). If his name's still a tad obscure for some, he includes more renowned names in his game, including Tedashi and Lecrae and up'n'comers such as piquant female spitter Butta-P and Eminem-ish Trubble to lend support. As seems to be an increasingly common tactic, some of the production seems to beckon to soul gospel and cCm radio music directors, who are slowly beginning to embrace hip-hop; the most blatant such move to woo the contempo' Christian crowd's a collaboration with pop band MikesChair, who offer some kinda' Arminian-sounding background vocals for a rapper who identifies with the currently high-profile Reformed camp of rhymers. Json's persona is unique enough to withstand the smoothing of musical edges and emerge sufficiently street and certainly sincere. [LAMP MODE/INFINITY] JAMIE LEE RAKE

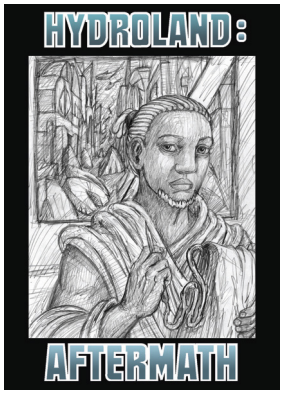
SENT BY RAVENS

MEAN WHAT YOU SAY

Sent By Ravens' vocalist Zach Riner has said that the group's new album, *Mean What You Say*, was "influenced by the actions of The Westboro Baptist Church." This is influence in the best possible impact, however, and doesn't mean the group will be protesting at funerals and ruffling the gay community's feathers anytime soon. Instead, he's trying to learn from that activist's group's mistakes by using his words much more carefully. Instead of pointing fingers at sinners, Riner sings songs like "We're All Liars," which is confessional, rather than confrontational. There is just something soul-affirming about a singer willing to admit his own faults, before nitpicking flaws in others. The music on *Mean What You Say* is grooving, bass-y rock, with mostly clean vocals. Riner definitely has a flair for the dramatic, although he never comes anyplace close to getting all prog on us. In the end, he always sounds like he means what he's saying, and that means a lot. [TOOTH & NAIL] DAN MACINTOSH

LIFEstyle

books & graphic novels



HYDROLAND: AFTERMATH | R-SQUARED COMICS
Hydroland: Aftermath is an action-packed, science-fiction story told from a Christian worldview. The science aspect of the story was influenced by Hydrodynamics, which is the study of the motion of fluids and how they are affected by internal and external forces. "One of the things we wanted to do ... was create a world in which a race of people not only lived in water, but learned to master it," says Justin Martin, writer and co-creator of HA. As he and Melchizedek, artist and fellow co-creator were discussing ways to incorporate Hydrodynamics into the inhabitants' use of water, they knew they wanted to be as creative as possible. You can download a free sampler of the comic at the R-Squared's website. [rsquaredcomicz.com] *DV*

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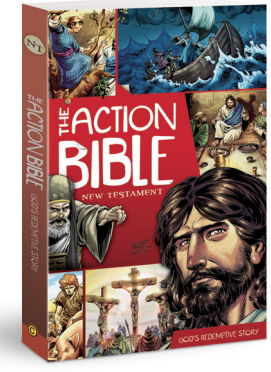
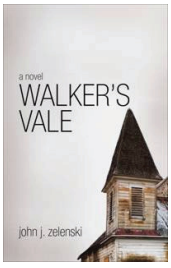
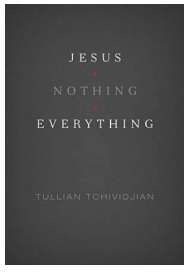


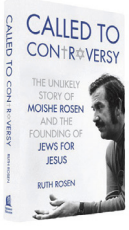
THE ACTION BIBLE NEW TESTAMENT | SERGIO CARIELLO
If you think about it, there are not many books as graphic and novel as the Bible – especially the New Testament – which makes *God's Redemptive Story* a natural for the detailed and color format. Longtime DC and Marvel Comics illustrator Sergio Cariello does a thorough and excellent job with these many stories. [David C. Cook] *DV*



WALKER'S VALE | JOHN J. ZELENSKI
James Cooper moved his family to Walker's Vale, Pennsylvania, in search of the ideal life. What he got was the just opposite. As this small town's eerie history is revealed and repeated, it's clear the devil is in the details – and he's waiting for the Cooper's young daughter. When the FBI come knocking at his door, James quickly realizes that his ideal life may come with a steeper price than he thought. This story of faith, deception, and horror will captivate readers as one man fights for his family's safety and embarks on a journey toward redemption in this suspenseful supernatural thriller. [Tate Publishing] *DV*

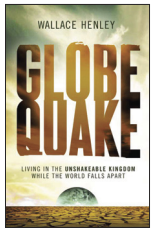
JESUS + NOTHING = EVERYTHING | TULLIAN TCHIVIDJIAN
Tullian Tchividjian's latest book is a study focused on the sufficiency of the Gospel. Inspired by a turning point in Tchividjian's ministry, a time when he wasn't sure about his future as pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, FL, Tchividjian spends a good chunk of the book's early pages explaining the way too many Christians (himself included, for a while) spend too much of their spiritual efforts trying to add wrongly motivated works to their faith lives, when Jesus has done everything necessary to measure up to God's high standards at the cross. And he's not preaching cheap grace, either, because he notes near book's end that the "power to obey comes from being moved and motivated by the completed work of Jesus for us." In Tchividjian's hands, the book of Colossians becomes newfangled Christian manifesto. [Crossway] *Dan MacIntosh*





CALLED TO CONTROVERSY | RUTH ROSEN
Ruth is the daughter of an incredible pioneer and disciple we had among us for the past half-century – Moishe Rosen, who founded Jews for Jesus. She crafted this heart-warming and insightful portrait of her dad via several interviews she had with him before he went to be with the Lord he served. His adventures were especially exciting during the '60s and '70s Jesus Movement era. The man's resolute faithfulness in the face of rejection, scorn and venom acts as an apologetic for the faith, as well as a deepened understanding of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. [Thomas Nelson] *DV*

GLOBE QUAKE | WALLACE HENLEY
With all the civil and economic unrest, natural and man-made disasters in the last decde, do you ever feel we're in the "Last Days" or just simply this close to falling apart? Author Wallace Henley says we're living through a "Globequake," an era of redefinition and rapid change. He asks some very important questions, like: "How do we maintain our personal stability, build unshakeable churches, solid families, truth-based educational systems, principled government, and successful, stable companies? This book has practical ideas for dealing with turbulent change. [Thomas Nelson] *DV*



LIFEstyle gear

YAMAHA DXS DXR SPEAKERS
These speaker cabinets put out the sound in a major way. The DXR speakers feature an EQ mixing capability that's pretty awesome for floor monitors. The DXS subwoofer line gives a thunderous low end to your sound situation. Both of these new lines are ideal for small bands, churches, solo musicians, etc, and they look pretty cool. [yamaha.com]

IMPERIAL CYMBALS
The Throwback line from Imperial is what we plan on using in the "backline" at the HM Magazine Showcase during SXSW this month in Austin. The handmade mix a hammered body with an unfinished bell to give it a unique, heavy, "washy" sound. [imperialcymbals.com]

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YAMAHA MIXING CONSOLES
Yamaha's MG mixer line has added new consoles for small-to-modest "medium format" venues (clubs, school, church, theater). The MGP16X and MGP12X mixers include some trick features, like mic preamps and VCM circuit modeling, as well as other effects – including a dedicated REV-X high-density reverb engine. The Stereo Image function gives more control on various speaker setups, too. The USB port even includes a built-in leveler to keep a consistent sound volume when playing music from an mp3 player (and it keeps the unit charging while playing). [yamaha.com]

GIBSON CUSTOM: ACE FREHLEY GUITAR
Gibson Custom announced the release of the Signature Series Ace Frehley Budokan '74 Les Paul. Gibson Custom worked directly with the current owner to analyze the guitar and replicate it down to the tiniest detail. Each signature series guitar is a near-perfect recreation of nearly mythical guitars, capturing the tone and feel of the guitar and every minute detail of the guitar. For this recreation, Gibson Custom worked directly with Frehley and current owner of the guitar. [gibson.com]

LIFEstyle gadgets

MONSTER REHAB
Technically, it's not electric (or is it?), but it sure helps you stay awake and tweak with your gadgets, so call it "a vital accessory." It's not carbonated, so it goes down a lot smoother than other energy drinks. The flavor tastes more lemonade than tea, but it's got both (and only 10 calories). So far, it's the only energy drink my wife enjoys the taste of. [monsterenergy.com] *DV* [Price: $34/case]

PARROT MINIKIT
You wanna be (and drive) safe, right? Forget Bluetooth devices in your ear or cabled headsets. This device clips to your sunvisor and automatically syncs to your phone (and contact list) as soon as you get near the car. It's truly hands-free, as it'll say, "You have a call from Bono, would you like to accept?" And you can simply say, "Reject" and it'll drop the call (or you can say "Accept" and talk to the rock star calling you). Press a button to make an outgoing call and hear the comman, "Who would you like to call?" Say the name in your address book and it'll make the call for you." While it was a tad tricky learning which buttons to push (at least for this mid-level techie) and it did take a long time for the initial battery charge (with an accessory cable and jack for your car), it was pretty simple to get setup and going. The TextFriendly™ service adds text and email read-aloud services to this package (for a subscription price) and I'm told Map directions can be used, too. Another great feature is that up to 10 different smart phones can be paired to this device, so you can be driving along in your van and any member of your band gets a call and it'll take the call. How cool is that? With an affordable price, you get custom car quality. I like that ... a lot. [parrot.com] *DV* [Setup Ease: B | Performance: A | Price: $89]

THE HM MAGAZINE PODCAST IS ALWAYS FREE

PODCAST.HMMAG.COM

GALAXY TAB
It's not really new, but Samsung's SCH-1800 tablet is a pretty nice little bugger (at 4.74" x 7.48"). My kid uses it for school, where it can access the web via 3G (with a plan) or Wi-Fi. It's an e-reader, movie-watcher, note-taker and, of course, mp3 player and camera. The operating system is Android, which means it'll play Flash files and there's loads of apps available (including HM Magazine (at mobi-book.com). The battery lasts a little over 12 hours. [samsung.com] *DV*
[Setup Ease: A | Performance: B | Price: $199]

LIFEstyle film

AGE OF HEROES

In 27 years, I don't think we've ever replaced a highlighted feature with a critical review, but why not a second take on this DVD review?

Age of Hero's might be better labeled *Age of Zeros*. This is a WWII story about a slapped-together band of British commandos dropped into Norway. Their objective is to capture secret RADAR technology from the Nazis. Sean Bean (the vengeful IRA terrorist from *Patriot Games*, Boromi in *Lord of the Rings*) turns in a less-than-mediocre performance. Clearly a small-budget film, with bad CG. A useful plot, but watered down with overacting, bad face makeup (seriously), and little character development. I got this movie for free and it wasn't worth it. As a coinsure of WWII movies this is very forgettable. If you want a good story on a low budget, rent the 2003 release *Saints and Soldiers*. [Entertainment One] *Mitch Roberts*

[Cuss: 12 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 50]

ROADIE

Jimmy, a longtime roadie for the legendary Blue Oyster Cult, has been fired by the bvand. With nowhere else to go, he returns home to his aging mom in Queens, NY, where he lies to everyone about being the band's manager, co-writing songs and just being there for a day. It makes you laugh to see him denying the obvious, but cringe at the same time. It's a depressing tale for anyone who ever holds out hope to be a lazy teenage bum again, but also a poignant kick in the pants at how ridiculous that notion is. Poor Jimmy quickly finds himself in a downward spiral with an old flame that's married to an old bully. The moments of human connection on an emotional level are somewhat rewarding, but overall the movie is such a good caricature of the rock and roll burnout that it's deflating. His coke/liquor binge with his friends blows up in spectacular fashion, which – although the starkness of it drives home a lesson in chemicals – it adds another layer of discouragement. [Magnolia] *DV*

[Cuss: 50+ | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 50]

NEVERLAND

If you ever wanted to delve deeper into the Peter Pan saga, this is the movie for you, where a young trouble-making Peter finds mischief and fun with his gang of "lost boys. They get thrust into a magic place called (well, you know what it's called). If you've seen one pirate movie, well, you've probably watched one more fanciful, more dramatic, more exciting and quicker-paced. The disc is loaded with bonus features including cast interviews, behind the scenes looks, storyboards and more, comes housed in collectible packaging with limited edition character postcards. [Vivendi] *DV*

DEEP IN THE HEART

Everyone I know seems to be loving this movie about the founder Richard Wallrath, whose personal demons caused him to hit rock bottom. After losing everything – job, family, and hope – this genuine Texas fella found the strength through faith that made him realize a strong family and the love of his children were the measure of a man's success. With his sons, he went on to build a successful business and used his success to become the highest all-time individual donor to Texas 4-H and FFA (Future Farmers of America) providing educational scholarships. This is a story of finding lost faith, love of family, and ultimately redemption. [Twenty8] *DV*

NO ROOM FOR ROCK STARS

While the list of HM-style bands that've played Warped Tour is a mile long, only Flatfoot 56 makes an extremely brief cameo. That appearance, by the way, comes along in the context of being rudely awakened in the morning with bagpipes. In doing this so many years (16), one documentary cannot cover anywhere near enough of even the "staples" of the tour, so it apparently doesn't even try (which was probably a great production decision). So, all hopes for a healthy presence of Christian hard music bands appearing in the movie aside, this movie excels at showing a great snapshot of the enormity of the travelling show. With great time-lapse editing and some choice overhead shots, one really comes away with a mad respect for the team that puts this one each year. In true DIY fashion, founder Kevin Lyman takes a central role in the footage, but never once comes across as pompous or self-important. The story within the story, however, is a band called Forever Came Calling, who simply travel along with the tour, hoping to gain more fans and sell just enough CDs to buy gas to make it to the next city. If you've ever been to a Warped Tour, you might recall having someone outside the front gates asking you if you'd like to listen to their band on headphones, with the hopes of buying one of their CDs really cheap. Chances are it might've been this band. This glimpse into the high-risk/all-in investment these guys make is compelling to watch. One can't help but root for them through the hardships they endure on this marathon tour. The bond that the viewer forms with the band is equally balanced out with the realization that this documentary is perfectly titled, as the grueling endurance test of the annual spectacle is conveyed with ultimate realism. [Shout! Factory] *DV*

KEY to Ratings = number of scenes w/cussing, gratuitous sex, violence & how easy it would be to start a "spiritual conversation" after viewing it with someone.

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

Concerning "Jeus is My Girlfriend" Songs: Observations on the Imbalances of Today's Worship (Part the Second)

In the last issue, we looked at the fact that contemporary Evangelical worship music very frequently is modeled on romantic, experiential, emotional, sensual musical expressions, a model that is increasingly becoming the dominant perceived norm in modern worship musical practices.

We saw also that this is such a perceived dominant worship norm that, even back in 2003, the writers of South Park (who are not Christians) could base an extremely popular episode ("Christian Rock Hard") on this perception, expecting even their (largely pagan) audience to relate to the humor involved, as it satirized the lyrics of contemporary Evangelical lyrical worship music.

We turn now to begin to attempt to answer the question of why this change has occurred. A change has occurred, indeed. In the first couple of centuries following the Reformation, the Protestants followed the Church's ancient practice of singing the Psalms (which they did in the vernacular languages and in the musical styles contemporary to their time) and instituted the congregational singing of hymns suited for the purpose (of which Lutheran chorales were some of the earliest examples).

The Psalms, of course, as well as many of the phrases and quotes within the congregational hymns, were from Scripture itself, and, as we'll eventually see, a good portion of the Bible, especially the Psalter, is expressed in experiential, subjective language (and some of the Bible's language is even romantic and sensual, of which the Song of Solomon is a prime example). Thus, a strain of the worship music of the Church from it's inception (inherited in many ways as it was from Old Covenant Israel) includes an experiential, sensual, subjective aspect within the larger worship tradition of the People of God.

However, though this experiential, subjective, emotional strand was an aspect of the Biblical worship music tradition, that strand was in balance with other emphases of Biblical worship instruction, and the music of the Church, and of post-Reformation hymnody amply reflected this.

For instance, this strand, though present, was in balance with more objective doctrinal content describing and lauding God such as in the lyrics of Isaac Watts' "Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun":

Jesus shall reign where'er
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

Where He displays His healing power,
Death and the curse are known no more:
In Him the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their fathers lost.

With power He vindicates the just,
And treads th' oppressor in the dust:
His worship and His fear shall last
Till hours, and years, and time be past.

The saints shall flourish in His days
Dressed in the robes of joy and praise;
Peace, like a river, from His throne
Shall flow to nations yet unknown.

This can profitably compared and contrasted with some lyrics from popular contemporary worship songs like "How He Loves":

So heaven meets earth like a sloppy wet kiss And my heart burns violently within my chest

And from "Draw Me Close To You":

Oh Jesus,
Draw me close to you
Never let me go
Cause nothing else could take your place
To feel the warmth of your embrace You are my desire No one else will do

Bad songs? Not necessarily. Too sensual? Not necessarily. However, the shift to experiential, subjective, romantic, sensual lyrics from more objective, balanced, doctrinal lyrics is obvious, and the contemporary lyrics quoted above increasingly dominate modern Evangelical worship. How and why did this change happen? Is the change justified Biblically? We will, Lord willingly, take up those questions in the next article.

[kempercrabb.net]

Guest editorial by Chad Johnson

RICH CHRISTIANS IN AN AGE OF HUNGER.
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.
–Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We bless God, celebrate Him with our praises, exalt Him as highest and brightest treasure. If you are not in the habit of blessing God, begin today. Spend time throughout the day lifting up His name with the fruit of your lips, your words. Walk through the store blessing God with your words. While at lunch, entertain the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ by thanking Him that He chose to share Jesus with you. Take an extra minute behind closed bathroom doors to worship God for the perfect Father that He is.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless His holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
–Psalm 103: 1-2

Jesus has become OUR Lord Jesus Christ. God is a generous giver. Jesus, the Messiah, shared and offered up by the Father, is mine, He is yours. Don't know Him yet? Ask Him to be yours, confess your faults, your issues, your problems (of which He is never surprised by). Believe in your heart that He is and He will be. Leap, don't jump, into the loving arms of a Father who has always known you. Welcome to the family!

Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. God has blessed us. It's never even been a remote possibility for us to out-bless God. It's an impossibility. Our "bless God" pales in comparison to his "God bless." The reality is, we have already been blessed. We were blessed the day Christ was crucified. The hour He offered up His life. The minute He was buried. The second He arose! The world has taught us much about measuring material blessings. Paul did not say that God, in Christ, has blessed us with every material blessing. I believe it's because the material is perishing and none of it will come with us when we die. Material is vapor. Spiritual is everlasting. God, help us understand what blessings we've been given. The Holy Spirit delivers every spiritual blessing in heavenly places to us. We are truly rich Christians living in an age of hunger. The world is hungry, but rarely knows it. Most Christians assume they are poor for lack of material resources, what a loss. Even in extreme material poverty, I am rich. I possess every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Start telling your fears, your hurts, your problems, your marriage, your work environment, your unbelief, your every concern – that God, in Christ, has already blessed you with every spiritual blessing. Everything Christ now has, He gives unto us. Receive His blessings. Crazy!

and forget not all his benefits,
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
–Psalm 103: 2-5 (Read all of Psalm 103)

Note: The title of this entry was taken from a book that was highly recommended to me. Pick a copy up for yourself at Amazon.

g_editorial by Mike Reynolds

guitarist, For Today

Devotion
"Devotion is that state of the heart where all things are swallowed up in God as the object of its supreme affection."
–Keith Green

Nothing short of complete devotion to Jesus can be called Christianity. Christianity is only real when all things are God's. Christ gave all things down to His life, likewise it is un-Christian for us to give any less.

If I give someone my car I give them everything with it – the engine, transmission, doors, etc. How could I say it was theirs if I kept some parts for myself? Likewise, how can I call my life an offering to God if I keep my thoughts, finances, or business relationships to myself? The truth is we are comfortable giving donations to God, things that we can live without, but Jesus is worthy of all 24 hours of every day to be surrendered to Him.

The truth is that you will only pay the amount you think something is worth, often haggling the price, then rejoicing over the good deal that you just got. This very same mindset exists in "Christians" today thinking in their hearts that they can have Him and all His benefits for simply a handful of hours every week. As if you are getting Him at a discount.

If this is the case, it is because you believe lies about God. In my estimation, God is only as valuable to us the measure of life we give Him. You would give someone $50 for something worth $50. What do you think about God to only give Him a portion of your life? You believe He is unworthy of your life and that there are better investments to pour your life into?

"Behold the kindness and severity of God"
–Romans 11:22

"How will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?"
–Hebrews 2:3

Do you suppose that giving 3 days a week to a newborn baby will sustain its life? No, and every one around would call it neglect. Likewise, can your soul survive if you only give God 3 days a week? No, there is no escape if we neglect the great salvation of the cross.

Give everything you have to God's purpose – your money, your time, your thoughts, your family, your breath, everything to be continually offered up to God as a love offering. You will think most about what you love most, is it Jesus? Is He your treasure?

He is worth everything.

Roots & Culture

Allan Aguirre

of Olive Trees & Wild Branches (Part 4)

We have established that the Punk Rock and Alternative genres established by bands like The Sex Pistols and Bauhaus have, through time, been replaced with mainstream hybrids and counterfeits like Avril Lavigne and Dave Matthews, and that the essence of these genres have been buried deep below the sands of conjecture and opinion.

I've shared my conviction that an understanding and application of the biblical roots of our faith would breathe new, sound, scriptural Life into the Covenant relationship bought for us with the shed Blood of the Lamb.

I shared how Paul, in Acts 24:14, defined Christianity as being a sect of Judaism and defended his faith by confessing that he believed "all things which are written in the Torah ('law') of Moses and in the Prophets," whereas for nearly 1900 years a Greek and Roman linear thought-process of a Jewish cyclical concept has buried the biblical roots and essence of our faith deep below the sands of conjecture and opinion.

Paul's teaching in Romans 11 should correct our modern perspective to the Jewish Roots of our faith, the Olive Tree of the House of Israel: "But if some of the branches were broken off [Israel], and you – a wild olive [a gentile believer] – were grafted in among them [Jews] and have become equal sharers in the rich root of the olive tree, then don't boast as if you were better than the branches [Jews]! However, if you do boast, remember that you are not supporting the root, the root is supporting you." Romans 11:17-18 (emphasis mine)

Paul continues, "…you (gentiles) had no Messiah. You were estranged from the national life of Israel. You were foreigners to the covenants embodying God's promise (Torah). You were in this world without hope and without God. But now, you who were once far off have been brought near through the shedding of the Messiah's blood. For He himself is our shalom – He has made us both one and has broken down the middle wall of separation which divided us by destroying in His own body the enmity occasioned by the Torah, with its commands set forth in the form of ordinances." Ephesians 2:12-15a (emphasis mine).

Did Paul just say that Jesus destroyed Torah with its commands and ordinances? It would seem so, but didn't he also say that, prior to Jesus, gentiles were foreigners to this same Torah, but have now been "brought near?" So which one is it – foreigners or destroyed?

The "simple" answer is both.

Scripturally, the law is separated into sections, a fact well known by Paul the Rabbi. We have the oral traditions, the Covenant and the Sacrificial Law. Verse 12 speaks of Covenant, while verses 14-15a obviously speaks of atonement Sacrifice as being "destroyed" by the cross and the removing of the "middle wall of separation" (a temple reference). This does not, however, "destroy" the Covenant Law and its observance (verse 10) with the goal being "One New Man" found in verse 16, the very foundation of this idea being within the Torah itself.

"So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers. On the contrary, you are fellow-citizens with God's people and members of God's family." Ephesians 2:19 (emphasis mine). Our root and culture as believers is found in Torah and Israel.

Christianity today remains a foreigner to this Mosaic Torah covenant embodying Messiah; a foreigner that has rejected the scriptural foundational root of its faith, believing that it's "better then the branches," and that it "supports the root" – thus estranging us ever the more from the national and spiritual life of Israel.

What does Jesus say about this?

[fb/twitter: allanAguirre]

ON MY MONOSYNTH

Being different is often punctuated with moments of embracing differences. Youthful quirkiness, put-on self-confidence, and Christian theology can combine to equal poor arts-and-craft-styled jewelry (frequently involving duct tape). For a few years as a teenager, I wore a zipper as a necklace. Over my shirt.

My taste in music evolved from sub-standard adult contemporary to aggressive (aggressively positive) pop-punk (with a *Muppet Show* cassette tape somewhere in there). Eventually, I found an artist both overtly Christian and derivatively quirky, sure to cause mass alienation – because nothing says more about taste than one's inaccessible top-shelf. It's the musical equivalent to acting gay for humor (a staple of Christian college dormitories). I use to say I would know my soul mate when I met a female fan of Joy Electric. That is to say, it can't be considered an eccentricity unless it's noticed.

Joy Electric was a synth-pop band, now a solo act, dogmatically committed to all things electric – save for the human voice of creator Ronnie Martin (who just might be a robot). The goal wasn't just to sound synthesized, but to sound from outer space. Whirs, bleeps and bloops are the chords, strums and scale. Here was 8-bit video game music covered by a choir of R2-D2s. The entire personality is one of creation, like a puppeteer showing the strings that allow his marionette to dance. Gloom was more apparent than pop-centricity, defying the colorful landscape most immediate to the listener. Ronnie wrote music from Oz that felt grounded in Kansas. He often spun fables over unfurling layers of Moog programming of German folklore, unicorn lands, grandfather cubists, even Nikola Tesla. Combine fantastical themes with a deep and prolific discography, and you have an artist that is both difficult and taxing to follow.

Robot Rock was my introduction to Joy Electric through the single "Monosynth" – a song I found too plodding to enjoy, although the music video was a talking point. *ChristianSongs* was where I really came into appreciation for Ronnie's music – an entire album written in defiance of the commercial push from many Christian artists of the era (early 2000). This was right around the time when Christian music was being mined for mainstream exposure (apparently), which in term led to diluted Christian messages (allegedly) for a shot at "real" success – because even Christians admitted their market didn't count (apologetically). Christians could exist in their own sub-culture, but never affirmed until recognized outside of it. Coincidentally, mainstream radio realized that Christian singles could be legitimate hits outside of their "Christian" genre confines ("Christian" being an even looser descriptor than "indie," encompassing all music under a religious preference). Ronnie's ploy, or more conviction, was to full-on embrace the designation with a disk of songs firmly rooted in Jesus and pop-electronica (though still somehow underpinned with an eerie darkness).

As far as I know, Ronnie had two convictions: Christianity and Roland synthesizers (and, possibly, hot air balloons). Ronnie's stance on faith is most apparent in the punky-synth blast of "Children of the Lord," a call to arms for Christians to stand boldly, although not necessarily clarifying what to do with their boldness: "Who cares? We do! We don't care what you think, our lives aren't for the taking, when all else fails we still believe in Him! (Yeah!)*" (*Punctuation added). This loud-and-proud rallying of the faith troops seems a direct response to mid-level persecution – the kind not rout with jail cells and beheadings as much as alienation and verbal ribbings. It's angry and direct – to say we'll exist in spite of you. Ronnie left no ambiguity as to his intended audience: "I sing electric for the godly collective."

Ronnie gave voice to a disenfranchised sub-section of the larger Christian sub-culture. My parents could exist fine in their cushy Christian surroundings. They could placard their home with Bible expressions and pictures of lighthouses (that were probably metaphors for Jesus, anyway), work in Christian environments (my father was a Baptist Minister after all), and raise kids within the realm of Christian entertainment (and non-offensive PG-13 movies that were deemed necessarily sterile by Focus on the Family's movie review website). I felt at times like a soldier going on leave duty every time I had to enter the secular arena of High School – I was told I was different, branded to be different (mostly by myself), and was not only engaged in what made me different as much as what made the divergence apparent and how I could deepen it.

Gaining prevalence among believers and youth conventions was the Christian "war" mentality. Granted, warring is a metaphor used first in Scripture, and Christians are called to take up the armor of God. However, that war described is against Satan and his forces. Modern Christian youth speakers propagate the war against the world and anything decidedly not Christian. Rather than advocate for peace or pro-life or sanctity of marriage, it turns into an attack – on homosexuality and abortion or even Marilyn Manson concerts (much to his chagrin, I'm sure. He is, after all, a shock rocker).

Ronnie gave me a rallying point. I loved his music, as much for the voice it gave me as for the quirky novelty it injected into my musical collection. I, too, could be a Moog purist, and I wasn't ashamed to be a child of God – a detail I wouldn't let you miss (I would wear it). If I could hit you over the head with a ROM cartridge shaped like the empty cross, well then you'd best be ducking, hellion.

If Ronnie was the Malcom X of Christian music, his brother, Jason, was the Martin Luther King, Jr.

Jason Martin rode a different beast to label-sanctioned releases. Just as prolific as his brother and under the moniker Starflyer 59, Jason produced a Beatles-brand of shoegaze. I stumbled upon his music in a bargain bin, where I promptly laid down a cool $7.99 for *Leave Here A Stranger* (come to think of it, clearance music was a lot costlier then – I guess that was back when labels were making money). I couldn't pass up a CD labeled to me as Christian alternative at a basement-level price. At 14, and two days before leaving for a week-long mission trip to inner-city Philadelphia, I had inadvertently purchased my first dream-pop album. I wasn't sure what to expect, and initially wasn't captivated, as Jason's vocals sit comfortably low in a mix of mid-tempo, atmospheric tunes. Despite the apparent dreariness of the melancholy delivery, the music had an underlying warmth, like a place to rest your head.

I only recall listening to Starflyer on the return trip. Something about the gentle riffs and limp melodies were the perfect decompression to ride down a monumental experience in my adolescent youth group-life – long stretches of road, a grocery store called "Food Lion," a crush on a girl with a lazy-eye, and Jason Martin.

Starflyer 59 is the quintessential Christian indie band. They're like the Christian Radiohead, a band that consistently releases droll, unexciting music of exceptional quality. There's little thrills among the subtle album-to-album progression, but the music still masters the moods it hopes to evoke. The mold is rarely stretched, but still produces fine guitar noise down the assembly line, so the workers have yet to tweak the formula. This is not a jab – they've reached a level of maturation most bands aspire to and sit comfortably among the top in their genre. Because of this, I find I'm unable to mine their discography for more than their masterpiece, *Stranger*.

Aspirations seem low for Starflyer, or maybe just realistic; each new release is to no fanfare outside of the faithful, no single push to alternative outlets, and little to no press – the official band website hasn't been updated since 2008. All parties involved seem content to let Starflyer rest within their niche. They're not out to chase new fans or broaden their market (Jason has sworn off touring), but those who care will seek, find, and be delighted.

Jason Martin is not at war. His message may exist – low-key mumblings, buried under layers of guitars and keys where it waits to be found, like a hidden treasure. He's the wise man on the mountain top and he's found his enlightenment. There he sits, content to make music for himself, but he doesn't object to being listened-in on, either. In this way, he bridges the gap between mainstream and Jesus-tinged music passively, by simply offering a choice in quality and accessible noise sans aggression.

Ronnie Martin offered the world of Christianity a palette of sharp-edged, brittle electronica. Take it or leave it, it was meant for the flock and unashamedly brazen toward unsanctified ears. The problem was it may have been too inaccessible for the so-called "godly collective" whom it was meant for exclusively.

I was once Joy Electric. Alienation isn't for everybody. Just those that want to be lonely.

PICK OF THE LITTER

☆ **Indrek Patte**
Fans of big, clean prog rock (like Neal Morse) will love this super melodic and well-played gem of an album (*Celebration*). Indrek Patte is from Estonia and he might possibly single-handedly bring that small country to the notice of rock music fans everywhere. Wow. Words like "meticulously arranged" and "carefully polished" give some hint at the excellence found in these eight lengthy and melodic tunes.
myspace.com/indrekpatte

Austin Poole
Synesthesia, Poole's latest, is all over the place stylistically, showing a penchant for a good hook along with the diversity. Like the rest of us, sometimes he's in more of an almost hip-hop mood and at other times flashy flamenco and others metal.
austinpoolemusic.com

Ascendant
Heavy, intense death metal from Denmark, Ascendant throttles the silence between notes by almost never resting from its frantic pace. There are tons of cool dynamics to their sound, however. There's also some choice words in "Degradation, Part 1," where bassist/vocalist Jens Gronhoj expresses: "It sickens me like (bleep) to see you so pathetic, like you know what pain is?"
ascendant.dk

Jehu Riders
A three-day worship and prayer music event called the Blaze Manifesto sparked the creative outlet that has become the *Awake O Sleeper* album. Josiah Van Vleet has crafted some prophetic worship tunes that occasionally sport a metalic edge and cry out for justice.
jehuriders.bandcamp.com

Lightswitch
Really strong melodic pop rock. Ready for radio kinda stuff. Very clean, solid hooks and nice production on *Holding On*.
lightswitchmusic.com

☆ **Asleep in the Light**
Named after one of the coolest and most heavy-hitting lyrical songs in all of Christian music, this metalcore band brings the sonic barrage of intensity with all the screamo additives you'd want to hear – growls, great drum and guitar tones, creative guitar leads, breakdowns and slamming screams.
myspace.com/asleepinthelightband

☆ **Kingsdown**
Thumpin' big rock in the vein of Breaking Benjamin, Nickelback, Red, yet with the hooks of NeedToBreathe. From Little Rock, AR.
myspace.com/kingsdown

Vesper
An exciting and energetic blend of strings, drums and electric guitars. When the wah-wah and the violin 'n' cello start singing and calling back to one another – then you know you're in some creative and fun territory.
vespermusic.net

Ghostree
Alternative rock from the UK. Slow, melodic and plodding with layers and textures of sound (keys, drums, guitar, vocal effects. Kinda dreamy pop.
facebook.com/ghosttreeband

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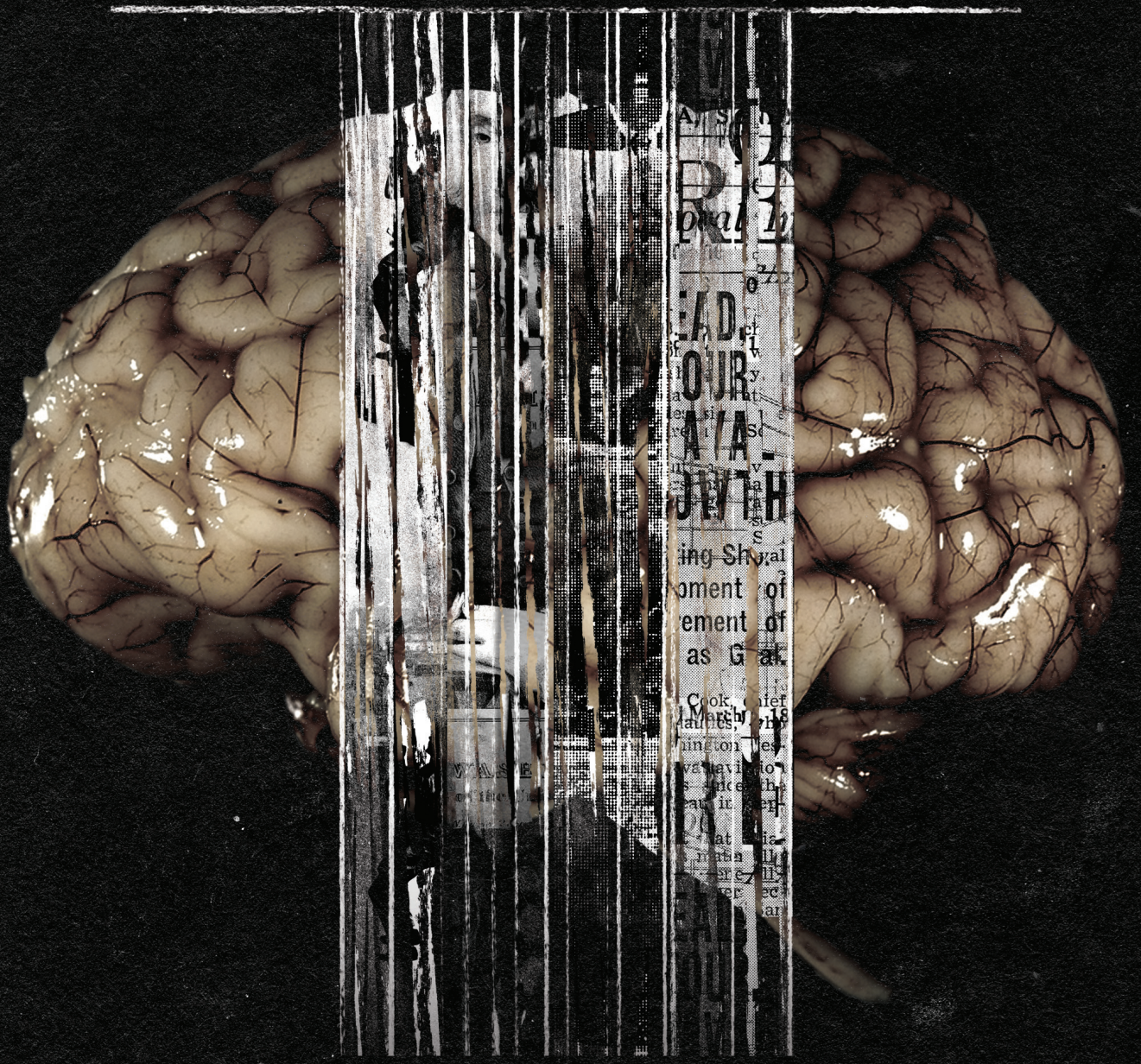

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Me and Jesus have it all worked out. Jesus and I are cool.

If you are living in the world, being of the world – and you know how to judge yourself – you don't need anyone else to condemn you. If you are a friend of the world, you are an adulteress. You are an enemy of God.

"...therefore, if you are a friend of the world, you're an enemy of God."

(James 4:4)

If that's you, it doesn't sound like things are cool between you and God.